

PRO WRESTLING 1994

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Pro Wrestling 1994: Pro Wrestling Torch 1994 Yearbook is published by *Pro Wrestling Torch Weekly* newsletter and editor/publisher Wade Keller. The price for the Yearbook through mail order including first-class postage is \$15 in the United States and Canada and \$20 overseas. All material herein is copyright (c) Wade Keller 1995. All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be republished or reprinted in any way without the express written consent of the publisher. Any inquiries regarding subscriptions to *Pro Wrestling Torch Weekly* or questions or comments on this book should be sent to P.O. Box 201844, Minneapolis, MN 55420 or by voice/fax phone to (612) 854-4274. Subscriptions to *Pro Wrestling Torch Weekly* are available for \$2 per issue or \$15 for 10 issues (\$2.25 per issue overseas) including auto-deductions for special multi-issue-equivalent yearbooks. Photo credits: cover: Mike Lano (Art Barr, Sabu); pg. 45 Jerry Wilson (Shawn Michaels), Mike Lano (Rey Misterio Jr.)

Welcome to the seventh annual *Pro Wrestling Torch Yearbook*—titled “Pro Wrestling 1994.” This book marks the fourth year in a row that the yearbook has had the same cover design and the third year in a row it has had the same basic format. It’s a format that I believe has evolved into a comprehensive, diverse, entertaining keepsake on the year in pro wrestling. This year’s edition features some upgrades in format and content worthy of note.

Major feature interviews have been a staple of *Torch* yearbooks from the beginning. This year’s feature interview lives up to tradition with the Konnan interview. It’s an interview that sets a new standard for outspokenness, candor, and controversy. While conducting the interview I found myself fascinated with Konnan’s outlook and opinions on wrestling (and life), intrigued by some of his more controversial views, and entertained by his willingness to dish out not-so-favorable comments about some people he has crossed paths with during his career. This year’s feature interview builds on the foundation and tradition advanced the last two years by Terry Funk and Ted DiBiase.

The rest of the yearbook collectively sets out to put a semblance of order and perspective on the year in wrestling. The rich tradition and high quality in-ring product of the Japanese wrestling scene is analyzed in Chris Zavisa’s “Japan Encyclopedia.” The feature, as in past years, not only reviews major stories in Japan during the year, but looks at how each promotion did in comparison to one another. The article acts as an informative review of ’94 and a primer for ’95 for those who closely follow Japan wrestling and acts as an invaluable, comprehensible introduction for those unfamiliar with the Japanese landscape.

For the fourth year running, *Pro Wrestling Torch* lists the “Top 50 Stories of the Year.” The top 10 finishers are profiled in full-page articles. Each article takes a point of view when reviewing how each top story affected wrestling fans and the course of the wrestling industry. Stories 11–50 are listed with brief comments on why each story made the list or how it affected the wrestling business.

The seventh annual year-end awards are also a long-running staple of the *Torch Yearbooks*. The 14 primary categories list the top 10 finishers in each category followed by the top three finishers in past years. The results of the poll are supplemented with reader comments on their individual picks, along with the picks of the editor and *Torch* columnists. The secondary category results are listed with the top five finishers in each category. Past winners of those awards are listed in the appendix.

The *Torch* has expanded on two concepts that began in the yearbook two years ago. The “Worldwide Top 100 Ratings” has expanded from one to two pages. Like the past two years, the top 100 wrestlers are listed, but this year also includes a promotion by promotion and country by country breakdown of the ratings so the reader can easily compare wrestlers within each promotion along with inter-promotional comparisons. The number of people having input on the ratings is higher than in past years. Wrestlers from many of the promotions listed gave their first-hand opinions on who the better wrestlers were in their promotion and other groups they were closely familiar with. Promoters, bookers, and wrestlers all took part in compiling this list. Avid viewers of international videotapes, including *Torch* columnists and correspondents, also took part in the inter-promotional comparisons. For the first time ever this type of list is accompanied by a detailed explanation of the criteria for the ratings, a criteria which was read to those within the business who added input to the rankings.

The *Torch*’s list of wrestling’s most influential people also changed format. Like the ratings, the influential list includes a detailed explanation of the criteria with notes on some minor changes from past years. This poll, like the top 100 rankings, saw a diverse cast of people consulted so the list reflects a perspective of wrestling journalists, wrestlers, and promoters. The layout includes standard sized text as opposed to oversized text in the past two years, so more information and analysis is given to each of the top 10 qualifiers, especially the top two. Positions 11–15 also receive a brief analysis whereas in past years they were just listed without comment.

Bruce Mitchell’s “Fourth Annual Year-In-Review Quiz” once again takes a different slant on the year in his much anticipated quiz format. He takes his shots at a wide variety of targets and illustrates the absurdities of the year. As in past years, Bruce will gain new fans and earn some new enemies.

The yearbook closes with the appendix which crams a bunch of facts into an easily accessible format. Besides lists of major event results and statistics, rosters and real names, and title changes of 1994, an updated and expanded glossary of insider terms is included along with a more exhaustive list of mail order publications available on wrestling.

I am excited about the improvements made in this year’s yearbook (and already can’t wait to implement more improvements and ideas in next year’s edition). A very special thanks to everyone who helped make this yearbook possible. Everyone’s feedback on this book is sincerely invited.

THE TOP

50

The top two stories of 1994 involve the two most important people in the wrestling business over the 15 years—Hulk Hogan and Vince McMahon. The top story, Hogan signing with WCW, caused Vince McMahon to launch a “New Generation” campaign to offset the perception that WCW was now wrestling’s top promotion. The number two story, Vince McMahon being found not guilty in his and his company’s steroid trial, saw Hulk Hogan testify that he still considered himself a good friend of Vince McMahon. Hogan, though, never looked Vince in the eye despite his testimony probably being one of the primary factors leading to the not guilty verdict. McMahon then spent the rest of the year bashing Hogan, calling him a shell of his former self, as a way to make it seem as if the WWF wouldn’t take Hogan if they could get him as long as Hogan insisted on being in the spotlight.

The two biggest figures in wrestling made a ton of headlines in newspapers and on news-based TV shows. Ric Flair, the best wrestler of the last 15 years, also made major news within the industry. He retired from wrestling, insisted it was permanent to friends and co-workers, and then openly planned behind the scenes for an eventual return. Flair was intertwined in the top story of the year in that he gave in to every wish and whim of Hogan when it came to booking their feud with each other. That giving in became the number three story of the year.

Stories five and six were also intertwined. Art Barr headlined AAA’s first pay-per-view in the United States and showed himself to be not a rising star, but a current superstar with potential to be a main component of AAA’s expansion into the United States. That showcase match turned out to be his last as he died less than a month later in his sleep in his home in Portland, Oregon, creating the greatest “what if?” speculation since David Von Erich’s death changed the course of the wrestling industry.

Nineteen-ninety-four was the year of big stories more than a year of industry trends. In fact, 1994 was more of a year of promoters throwing things against a wall to see what would stick than a year where earth

shattering trend reversals took place. WCW surprised people by signing Hogan. The WWF surprised people by escaping the government’s indictments with a not guilty verdict. Diesel surprised people by becoming the WWF Champion late in the year.

ECW surprised people by surviving and maturing into a well-defined, well-produced product that captured the interest of people nationwide and worldwide. Shane Douglas surprised people with his tirades against Ric Flair on the air. Joey Styles surprised people by not only turning into one of wrestling’s best announcers, but proving false the paradigm that every broadcast booth must be occupied by two people.

The Ultimate Fight Championship events surprised people by developing into a successful staple of the pay-per-view landscape. Basically a real version of pro wrestling, it showed how compelling “real fighting” can be, but also showed why pro wrestling matches evolved into not being “real” due to match brevity and brutality.

More things stuck to the wall in 1994 than didn’t stick. ECW and UFC stuck to the wall, SMW and USWA supershows stuck to the wall. The Hogan signing sorta stuck to the wall, but was pretty gooey at times. Other things, though, didn’t stick to the wall. The WWF “New Generation” campaign didn’t take the country by storm because it wasn’t true to its name. Cartoon gimmicks like The Dumpster and Henry Godwinn made people wish for an older generation, but WCW quickly fixed that desire by bringing back Hacksaw Duggan, Brutus Beefcake, and Honky Tonk Man.

Television ratings didn’t vary tremendously from 1993 through 1994, but syndication for both WWF and WCW reached new lows, despite snazzier production values and Hogan’s resurfacing. Buyrates remained basically at 1994 levels. If anything, 1994 showed that the wrestling industry’s lowpoint may have already been reached as the conservative big two held somewhat steady while others tested potential openings in a market that is much bigger than the two big two are satisfying.

Stories of 1994

HOGAN SIGNS WITH WCW

Receives biggest guarantee in history of wrestling

After months of negotiations, Hulk Hogan (real name Terry Bollea) agreed in principle to wrestle for WCW. On the June 4 edition of "WCW Saturday Night" on TBS, a crawler ran across the bottom of the screen announcing that Hogan had officially signed with WCW.

The signing appeared to shift the balance of power in the wrestling industry from a WWF dominated market to a more equal playing field. WCW took advantage of that perception by claiming they were number one, but WCW never was number one in any quantifiable category.

Well, their Clash rating for the first televised Ric Flair vs. Hulk Hogan match drew a 4.5 rating which the WWF didn't touch all year. They drew a better buyrate on one of their pay-per-views (Havoc's 1.1) than the WWF, also. But the overall numbers showed the WWF ahead in TV ratings (although just barely), pay-per-view buyrates, and house show attendance. Merchandising was also heavily in the WWF's favor if only because they ran over 350 house shows (where most merchandise is sold) versus just over 75 events for WCW.

Hogan had been with the WWF consistently from 1985 to 1992, except for a few hiatuses to film movies. From 1992 to 1994 he was with the WWF on and off. Never, though, when he was not with the WWF did he appear in any way to be competing with the WWF and Vince McMahon until signing with WCW.

Hogan left the WWF for good when he and McMahon finally had what amounted to irreconcilable differences. His first hiatus from the WWF was an attempt to temper the growing scandals regarding his past steroid use and his lies about that use on the Arsenio Hall Show. His second hiatus came after his comeback was a financial flop and ended with a title loss.

On July 13, 1992, Hogan lost the WWF Title to Yokozuna. On June 15, 1993 the two sides agreed to part ways after an upcoming European tour. The WWF wanted to build new stars, beginning with an attempt to market Lex Luger as the top babyface. Hogan wanted to build a new career in television and the movies. And, frankly, neither Vince nor Hogan wanted to be around each other when the indictments hit regarding the steroid controversy.

Except for a short stay in Japan, Hogan's first match back was July 17 in Orlando, Fla. and in that match he got a belt back around his waist.

PRO WRESTLING TORCH

It's official: Hulk Hogan signs with WCW

Hogan to appear live on WCW Saturday Night through the end of 1994

By [Name] [Location]

The wrestling world's most powerful man, Hulk Hogan, has agreed to a multi-year deal with WCW, the company that has been the most successful in the industry since its inception in 1988.

The deal, which was announced on June 4, 1994, is a landmark move for WCW, as it marks the first time a wrestler of Hogan's caliber has joined the company.

Hogan, who has been a mainstay of the WWF since 1985, is expected to appear on WCW Saturday Night, the company's flagship television program.

The deal is expected to be worth millions of dollars, making it the largest in the history of the wrestling industry.

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The deal is expected to be announced in the near future, and it is likely that Hogan will be a major draw for WCW.

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Wrestling World magazine has been reporting that Hogan had signed with WCW, but the company had been reluctant to confirm the deal.

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end of the first chapter of Hogan's WCW stint. He began making TV appearances for WCW in June and began wrestling in July. He wrestled for WCW on two Clashes, three pay-per-views, one European tour, and six other arena events. He also made several TV taping appearances for interviews.

Those dates, about two dozen, cost WCW millions of dollars. His contract was set up for him to receive \$300,000 guaranteed for each of the Clashes and pay-per-views—a total of \$1.5 million. Plus, he received 25 percent of the increase in pay-per-view revenue, which equaled an estimated \$500,000. Add in the generous merchandising cut he received, and for just over six months of working for WCW he received in excess of \$2 million.

WCW wasn't elated and wasn't depressed about the deal they cut him. In the end, Hogan was clearly the biggest winner, but because the numbers didn't result in much if any increased profits for WCW, Hogan probably didn't receive as generous of a guaranteed deal when he resigned with WCW for beyond 1994.

Besides hopes for increased revenue and profits, WCW was hoping that Hogan would give WCW a definitive edge over the WWF in TV ratings. TBS ratings actually dropped 5 percent from a year earlier and their syndicated network, despite strength of Hogan's name, did not improve. The two Clash ratings averaged more than 10 percent higher than the same Clashes a year earlier, although one included Flair vs. Hogan. Four of the six arena events Hogan appeared on were clear successes.

The most telling test of Hogan's drawing power was his first match without Flair as an opponent—Starrcade against Butcher. Hogan vs. Butcher outdrew Flair vs. Vader from Starrcade the year before. Hogan's return was a mixed bag, giving those who wanted to paint the move as positive enough ammunition to do so and those who wanted to paint it as negative enough ammunition to do so also.

Hogan did add to his reputation of being self-centered and ego-driven in the way he approached his booking. He also stirred controversy with his front office influence in booking matters outside of his programs.

In 1994 Hogan showed he has some box office life in him yet, but he will not single-handedly shoot WCW ahead of the WWF, either.

After dramatic steroid trial, back to business for WWF

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AAA STAR BARR DIES

His loss will change the course of AAA in the U.S.

Death is rarely timely, but sometimes death comes at the worst of times. For Art Barr, it was the worst. He was engaged to be married, was living with 5 year old son Dexter from a previous marriage, had become one of Mexico's top two or three star wrestlers, and was on the verge of being an international superstar.

All of those dreams, achievements, and aspirations came to an end on Nov. 23. Barr died in his sleep and after several autopsies, no cause of death was determined.

The 28 year old Art Barr built a career despite many elements working against him. He was undersized as 5-10 and around 200 lbs. He was considered a loose cannon because of trouble with the law he encountered which led to him plea bargaining to first degree sexual assault and being sentenced to 180 days of community service. He was labelled a substance abuser.

His first big break in WCW as "The Juicer" was cut short because of bad publicity stemming from that July 1989 incident. Barr continued to work local shows in his father's promotion in Oregon until second his big break came along.

Barr entered the Mexican wrestling scene in March 1991, four years after his pro debut, under a mask with the moniker "American Love Machine." By April 3, 1992, he was a top drawing heel in Mexico as 18,000 fans sold out a 17,000 seat building at Arena Mexico to watch him lose his mask to Blue Panther in a mask vs. mask match. Over 8,000 fans watched on big screen television in the parking lot. From there, Barr was one of the top heels in Mexico—if not the top heel—until his death.

If there was a list of the most influential people worldwide rather than just in the U.S. in this yearbook, Barr would have held a top slot. Barr was more than perhaps the best heel in the world at the time of his death. He was more than just the most talented of the top stars in Mexico. He was responsible, more than anyone else, for advancing the style of wrestling in Mexico.

Barr brought the traditional flamboyance of an American heel to the AAA rings. He brought a super-bumping style that heels employ in the U.S. He brought a talent behind the mic that had been inspired by the Roddy Pipers and Ric Flairs of the world. And he brought an overall style that was different enough, American-enough, to not only get over, but to be emulated by other wrestlers in Mexico.

Along with his steady tag team partner and best friend Eddy Guerrero, he introduced a

PRO WRESTLING TORCH

"Love Machine" Art Barr dies in his sleep

One of the world's fastest rising stars and top Mexican heel dies in his sleep at home

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Diesel wins WWF Title Backlund beats Hart, loses belt days later

That, who were featured as being... Backlund, who was featured as being... Hart, who was featured as being...



TORCH HIGHLIGHTS...

MAJOR EVENT TORCH ANALYSIS...
Backlund beats Hart, loses belt days later...
Diesel wins WWF Title...

stiffer style to the ring than Mexicans were used to. The acrobatic, ballet-like movements of traditional lucha libre were complimented with hard clotheslines and suplexes. In Mexico, Barr proved to be a total package. Because he was starting to realize that, his death is all the more untimely.

Barr gained a ton of confidence after his four-to-five star match at AAA's first pay-per-view in the United States. He and Eddy Guerrero lost to Blue Panther & El Hijo del Santo in Los Angeles in the highlight of his career. While some wrestlers approach a pay-per-view no differently than assembly line workers approach another Monday workday, Barr thrived on the insecurity of new challenges. He met the challenge of his first major pay-per-view match and gained confidence from his success.

That would turn out to be his last match. Had he lived, one can only speculate where his career would have gone, where his talent and focused drive to succeed would have taken him.

He could have become a top star in Japan. Because he was so well versed in various styles, and because his personality was just as easily established on a ring entrance as it was during an English interview, he would have gotten over with New Japan fans.

He would have continued to be a top star in Mexico, continuing to increase his \$3,500 a week guaranteed contract. As a popular heel, eventually he would have turned and become an

American-born hero to the Mexican fans who loved to hate him, but always appreciated his energy and ring style.

But what's most sad about his death from a professional standpoint is what he could have meant to the U.S. wrestling scene. Barr was by far the most memorable performer on the AAA pay-per-view on Nov. 12. He was clearly the most well-rounded. While he fell slightly below Konnan on star-power appeal and below Rey Mysterio Jr. on flying ability and below Blue Panther on mat wrestling skill and below Perro Aguayo on grittiness, he was in the 95th percentile on all of those qualities and more.

His interview ability and American background would have been what gave AAA an anchor to build around in the U.S. Barr could have been the spokesman who broke the stereotype of AAA being a "Mexican product." He was American enough to attack narrowly focused fans who would then learn to appreciate the masked wrestlers and other non-American talents. His drive to succeed at the expense of the big two who overlooked him or didn't stand by him (and arguably for good reason) during the down times in his career would have helped get people involved with AAA/IWC off of their butts and working to succeed in this market.

From a professional standpoint, his death hurt AAA's heel roster; forced AAA to break up the Los Gringos Locos heel team lead by Barr, Konnan, and Guerrero; led to Konnan turning babyface again; and left AAA without a perennial and unreplaceable main event wrestler. And all that Barr brought to AAA's success in Mexico he could have brought to the chances of AAA succeeding in the U.S.

If AAA were to succeed in the U.S., its more athletic based style would force the WWF and WCW and every other promotion attempting to attract U.S. fans' dollars to up the level of their in-ring product. While WCW concentrates on emulating past success and the WWF favors success through glitz more than athleticism, AAA might have shown both of those premises to be misguided.

Without Barr leading the way, AAA's chances of forcing the U.S. industry to reexamine its approach and its priorities will be delayed, if not eliminated. Because of how integral a part he was in AAA's eventual expansion into and influence of the U.S. wrestling industry, his death, as much as any death ever, changed the future of the industry.

But WCW-AAA relationship struggles from start to finish

AAA debuted on a large scale in the U.S. in August of 1993. After several successful shows at the L.A. Sports Arena and some modest success elsewhere, AAA began talks with WCW about working with them in promoting a AAA

e approach of the '80s) by exposing en mass to

As 1995 got under way, the plans for another WCW-AAA pay-per-view looked shaky. One way or another, though, with or without WCW, the last has not been heard from AAA. With an English-speaking, national weekly timeslot, very few who are well-acquainted with the AAA in-ring style believe that AAA couldn't compete on a national scale with the WWF and WCW. First, though, AAA has to decide they want to compete, then do it on their own and play catch-up in many out of ring areas.

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DIESEL WINS WWF TITLE

Vince McMahon gambles with new champion

Two years ago no one would have dreamt it. It's this type of story, in fact, that keeps everyone who follows the wrestling industry guessing. Remembered as the ill-gimmicked, big clod from WCW, Kevin Nash debuted in the WWF on June 8, 1993 and in 17 months, he had steadily rose in the eyes of WWF management as a future superstar and franchise babyface.

The road to the top wasn't full of the accolades that Sting received or the forecasts of fame that Lex Luger received. Nash moved up despite his push and despite forecasts of mediocrity.

Before becoming a pro wrestler, the 33 year old Michigan native Nash was a standout high school basketball center, a recruited member of the University of Tennessee, and a military man. After leaving the military where he was involved in classified guard duty, he worked at an Atlanta nightclub. It was there that several members of WCW got to know him as the giant bouncer at the front door. Current WWF bigwig Jim Ross convinced Nash to become a professional wrestler.

With little training, Nash debuted as one half of the Master Blasters with partner Al Green. From there he took on other personalities and gimmicks, such as the two-dimensional Oz and the fast-talking Vinnie Vegas. It was as the Vegas persona that people began to take notice of Nash. His interviews on TV and extended co-hosting shots on Jim Ross's WSB radio show in Atlanta showed that Nash was a good speaker and had a quick wit.

It was from the beginning that people saw potential in Nash as an agile, athletic big-man, although because he had so little training and in-ring experience he was grouped with a long line of clods clogging WCW's roster.

As his contract with WCW expired, he decided to accept an offer to join the WWF in a bodyguard role for Shawn Michaels. His role was limited at first, but grew into a speaking role. He interfered in Michaels's matches and eventually became his tag team partner.

In regard to his lack of success in WCW compared to the WWF, Nash told Chet Coppet of NewSport in January 1995: "That goes the same as Cecil Fielder. When he was with Toronto, he did nothing. Now he's with Detroit. He's still playing major league baseball. I think people grow. I think people change in time. I think my time maybe wasn't then. I matured. My association with Shawn Michaels helped me a

PRO WRESTLING TORCH

"Love Machine" Art Barr dies in his sleep

One of the world's fastest rising stars and top Mexican heel dies in his sleep at home

By Vince Kelley, Editor and Publisher

Art Barr, who was known as "The American Love Machine," died in his sleep at his home in Los Angeles, California, on June 10, 1993. He was 34 years old. Barr was a professional wrestler and a former bodybuilder. He was known for his intense physique and his love of women. He was a popular figure in the wrestling world and was considered one of the top heels in the industry.

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TORCH HIGHLIGHTS:

MAJOR EVENT TORCH ANALYSIS

Bob Backlund wins WWF Title after

Over the top of the title, Barr was a

MAJOR EVENT SPOTLIGHT

Chris Zentgraf reports on the event

and the event of the night.

ETC. NEWSWIRE

Rob O'Neil returns to the ring

in his hometown of Detroit.

WCW NEWSWIRE

Nancy Savarino interviews

Headliner and the event.

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were clearly into Diesel's tough guy character.

McMahon decided that his "New Generation" campaign needed a kick. With Hulk Hogan attracting attention to WCW, McMahon believed the WWF needed something to set itself apart. Bret Hart was the WWF's franchise babyface, but he was only a mid-card wrestler when Hogan was around. Management believed Hart had a smaller upside than Diesel. The title belt would also mean more to Diesel than Bret, as Bret's reputation with or without a belt made him a main event wrestler.

As a result, sooner than almost anyone expected, Diesel was given a chance to light the WWF on fire. WWF management had Bob Backlund capture the WWF Title at Survivor Series and had Diesel turn babyface. Three days later, Diesel replaced the "injured" former champion Bret Hart and beat Bob in 6 seconds.

The fan reaction for Diesel's victory at MSG was deafening, but from there Diesel's limitations began to take over. He wasn't quite established enough as a babyface to be more popular than Bret Hart, he was over as a tough man but not as a great wrestler, and fans were clearly more into him as a rebel heel than a pandering babyface. In short, Diesel's first few weeks as champion were not encouraging.

Rather than enticing fans who had stayed away for years to attend house shows, attendance didn't change as Diesel defended against Backlund. Because so much was riding on Diesel, Backlund was made the scapegoat. Some say Pat Patterson was also made the scapegoat for Backlund not drawing as a challenger for Diesel, thus prompting the hiring of Jim Ross.

Diesel finished the year in a questionable position. Some thought management would pull the plug, but almost every WWF insider said too much was riding on Diesel's success, including McMahon's ego. At the Royal Rumble early in 1995, Diesel was given an endorsement as champion by fighting Bret Hart in an evenly fought match to a draw. In February, the mega push for Diesel continued. While there was nothing on the level of the "Lex Express Tour," Diesel was given a franchise babyface push with carefully plotted TV appearances and sitdown personal interviews.

The Diesel experiment will be one of the bigger stories of 1995, because if he becomes a drawing card champion for the WWF, McMahon and Co. will have shown they can make a champion out of raw potential rather than thriving with established stars acquired from other promotions.

7

UFC EVENTS SUCCEED

Wrestling/martial arts hybrid finds audience

Professional wrestling became a worked athletic stage show because real stuff was much too boring. When two wrestlers of equal skill level got into the ring against each other, they would wrestle for more than an hour, sometimes not relinquishing a hold for that entire period. Some fans were intrigued by the human chess match, but most other were bored with it.

Wrestling promoters, who evolved from running carnival tough-man challenges, saw that there was bigger money in some match-ups than others and bigger money with some match styles than others. Therefore in the 1910s, if not a few years sooner, main event wrestling matches were scripted in the sense that outcomes were predetermined in order to produce the best rematches down the line.

In the 1937 book "Fall Guys," Marcus Griffin wrote about the dominant wrestler of that era, Frank Gotch. "Gotch, according to old timers, was a supreme bluffer who went his merry successful bonebreaking way because he did 'business' with the more capable bonecrushers whom he met and dominated the lesser lights through a fiendish delight in breaking bones and maiming less fortunate and skilled adversaries."

There was doubt in those early years of organized professional worked wrestling whether Gotch could have defeated Joe Stecher, Ed "Strangler" Lewis, Stanislaus Zbyszko, Joe "Toots" Mondt, and others of his era and future eras.

That brings us full circle, perhaps, to the Ultimate Fight Championships. Is Royce Gracie the Frank Gotch of his era? Is he a legitimately tough fighter with enough grappling and martial arts skills to defeat most opponents, but then "does business" (i.e. plans finishes) with those whom he might lose to?

If the gravy train is lucrative enough, there will be a long line of credential-filled opponents willing to "do the job" for Gracie for a big payoff. That's how it worked in the olden days, and that's how it might just be working now.

The Ultimate Fight Championship tournaments (UFC) debuted on pay-per-view in 1993. They grew in popularity and publicity throughout 1994, ending 1994 as a definite competitor to the WWF and WCW. UFC in-house statistics reported a 40 percent crossover rate of their pay-per-view customers with wrestling fans.

Some would argue that UFC, real or not, is professional wrestling also. After all, UFC's

PRO WRESTLING TORCH

Gracie wins Ultimate Fight IV tournament

Dan Severn puts up marathon fight in the finale of successful pay-per-view event

Finalist Severn reflects on loss

TORCH HIGHLIGHTS...

TORCH STYLE PLAY...

TORCH TALK...

rules are basically that of professional wrestling cage matches—there are basically no rules and the only way to win is to cause your opponent to submit or knock them out. The techniques used during UFC tournaments are similar to what pro wrestling would be like if it were real. It certainly resembles the UWFI and Pancrase in Japan—two professional shoot wrestling groups—rather than boxing, full-contact karate, and kickboxing.

In fact, those who know how to grapple on the mat rather than those who are only adept at striking on their feet tend to dominate the tournaments, most notably Royce Gracie. UFC is nothing more than pro wrestling gone full circle, back to its roots in the early 1900s.

The lingering question is whether UFC's matches are works. What isn't lingering is whether UFC has been a success. Pay-per-view industry trade journals estimate that UFC4 drew a buyrate around 1.0, not far off in overall buys from the so-called dream match of Hulk Hogan vs. Ric Flair. All three UFC events in 1994 averaged better buyrates on pay-per-view than WCW's eight events and only slightly below the WWF's five-event average.

Another element that makes UFC fit into the category of pro wrestling is that it features several athletes who are also pro wrestlers. The main event opponent for the phenom Gracie, Ken Wayne Shamrock, is a former pro wrestler in the U.S. who now concentrates on shoot-style wrestling with Pancrase in Japan. Dan Severn is

a veteran independent pro wrestler in the U.S. who wrestles regularly in Japan for the shoot-style UWFI and on U.S. indie shows.

While the UWFI is clearly not "real fighting" in that the finishes are predetermined, there is more mystery over the Pancrase group in Japan and the UFC tournaments in the U.S.

Coming out of UFC3, there were many who were skeptical of the realism. Many fighters threw roundhouse punches that barely grazed their opponents rather than straight punches with a better chance of striking on target. Other changes in the tournament format looked like behind-the-scenes maneuvering but turned out to be merely disorganized growing pains.

UFC4 ended no better. The show went off the air before the conclusion of the main event in around half of all cable homes because the match went longer than the allotted satellite time. That made the match seem real, but on the other hand some were skeptical of the way the finale ended with Severn giving up to Gracie suddenly, as if to not go past a short extension they received on satellite in the other half of the homes.

Real or not, UFC is battling the image of being "too violent." Despite a mutual respect that appears to exist between most fighters not to try to permanently hurt or maim each other, the lack of rules and selected highlights used to sell the shows early on made UFC look like human cockfights. Unlike pro wrestling in the early 1900s where strikes with fists were illegal, UFC allows such blows. As a result, be it in a New York media blitz, *Details* magazine, or syndicated TV talk shows, all have taken their shots at the UFC's potential brutality.

If UFC is to continue building momentum, they'll have to stand the scrutiny of whether its bouts are predetermined and whether its too violent to deserve acceptance in mainstream America.

Either way, for as long as it exists and as long as it remains at its current success level or grows, it will provide a legitimate alternative to the WWF and WCW events. Its success could influence the style of the WWF and WCW, perhaps sending them in the other direction to a more high-flying, less violent lucha libre style or to directly competing with UFC by providing a more realism-based style.

UFC has already had an impact on pro wrestling and throughout 1995, U.S. promoters will closely watch and react to this unexpected new pay-per-view competition.

STEAMBOAT RETIRES QUIETLY

One of the greats of the last two decades calls it quits

The two biggest names in wrestling in the '80s, Ric Flair and Hulk Hogan, have threatened retirement or actually retired several times each. The wrestler often overlooked as one of the top stars of the '80s, Rick Steamboat, retired for real in October after injuries suffered on August 24 prevented him from returning to the ring.

Steamboat, 41, real name Richard Blood, finished third in the "Torch Decawards" (Wrestler of the '80s) poll behind Flair and Hogan. He finished ahead of such influential names as Bruiser Brody, Roddy Piper, Ted DiBiase, Randy Savage, Harley Race, Nick Bockwinkel, and Terry Funk.

Steamboat was a main eventer wherever he wrestled. He didn't have the charisma of Flair, the star quality of Hogan, the monster-look of Brody, or the wit of Piper. He was a main eventer because of how different he was. He was a hard working, family man who while usually soft spoken, could blow his top and show real fire. That understated personality stood out, ironically, among so many other wrestlers who were trying to be more outrageous than the next guy. Steamboat was also an avid bodybuilder and competed in contests early in his career. He was considered to often have one of the top five builds in wrestling during his peak stages.

Born of Japanese-American parents, he grew up in Tampa, Fla. where he was a successful high school wrestler. He trained with Verne Gagne in Minneapolis in the same camp as Ric Flair. Like Flair, he found his first major success in the Carolinas working for the Crockett Family's Mid-Atlantic wrestling territory.

From 1977 to 1984 Steamboat was a main event contender for the NWA World Heavyweight Title and held the NWA U.S. Hvt. Title on three occasions. He won the U.S. Title first in January of 1978 from Ric Flair. He lost to Blackjack Mulligan later that year, but regained the title from Flair again in August of '78. Steamboat lost the title back to Flair and didn't hold it again until April of '84 when he defeated Dick Slater for the belt.

Most of his singles match fame came from his bouts against Flair. It was these bouts that established both wrestlers as greats of their time. Some of their bouts went 60 minutes, and many were considered classics and ahead of their time. Steamboat and Flair were fortunate to have each other to wrestle as they each had someone whom they could excel against.

Flair retains WCW belt against Steamboat

After a match that was as much a test of the will as a test of the skills of two of the greats of the last two decades, Ric Flair retained the WCW World Heavyweight Title against Rick Steamboat in a match that was as much a test of the will as a test of the skills of two of the greats of the last two decades. Flair, the defending champion, defeated Steamboat, the challenger, in a hard-fought battle that lasted over 60 minutes. Flair, who has won the title four times, retained it by pinning Steamboat after a series of high spots and a dramatic finish. Steamboat, who has won the title once, was unable to capitalize on his early lead. The match was a classic example of the "Flair style" of wrestling, with Flair using his technical skills to outmaneuver Steamboat's power. The crowd was in awe of the action, and the match was a highlight of the event. Flair's victory was a testament to his skill and determination, and it solidified his status as one of the greatest wrestlers of all time.

Windham, three of whom were among the top 5 wrestlers in the country at the time with Gilbert not far behind.

Flair and Steamboat then went on to have a long string of matches from February through May, three of which aired nationally on pay-per-view or cable. Feb. 20 in Chicago, Steamboat pinned Flair to capture for the first time the NWA World Heavyweight Title. He defended the title at the Apr. 2 Clash in a nearly 60 minute match on national television. He lost it on May 7 back to Flair. Those three matches finished second, first, and fourth respectively in the "Torch Decawards" poll.

From there Flair feuded with Terry Funk and Steamboat feuded with a heel Lex Luger. Steamboat did jobs for Luger most nights as a way to willingly help set Luger up for a future world title run. During this run of cooperation that is oh so rare in wrestling, he reached an impasse in contract negotiations with WCW V.P. Jim Herd and left the promotion.

He returned to the WWF shortly thereafter without nearly as much fanfare as the first run, leaving the WWF just as Flair arrived in the WWF, thus preventing them from having one more national feud.

Both would cross paths again as he returned to WCW for an apparently final time on Nov. 19, 1991 where he was brought in as a mystery partner, this time for Dustin Rhodes against Larry Zbyszko & Arn Anderson in a match that finished third for the match of the year in the Torch poll. Steamboat & Shane Douglas teamed later that year and had a tag title run of their own.

Appropriately enough, nearly 19 years after his first match, Steamboat's career closed with a U.S. Title victory over the man many consider "the next Ric Flair," that being Steve Austin. During that nationally televised match, Steamboat suffered a herniated and collapsed disc in his lower back which pressed on a nerve in his left leg. It turned out to be the most serious injury of his career. After eight weeks of three hour a day rehabilitation, and after doctors told him he had a very good chance of rupturing the disc if he continued wrestling, he opted for retirement.

Flair wrestled Steamboat in their final high profile match on pay-per-view May 14. The match lasted over 30 minutes and ended with a double pin—an appropriate final dance for two of the greats of the last 20 years.

Hogan and his friends invade WCW roster

Resurrection and comeback flop, hurt his character

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11-50

THE REST OF TOP 50

A Brief Look at Other Top Stories

- | | |
|---|--|
| 11 Chuck Austin wins \$25 million lawsuit over WWF | 31 WWF runs one tour of Japan, mediocre crowds |
| 12 Ric Flair replaces Dusty Rhodes as WCW booker | 32 Missy Hiatt files sexual harassment claim vs. WCW |
| 13 The Gangstas form in SMW, stir controversy | 33 Sid Vicious holds USWA Title last half of year |
| 14 Paul Heyman books ECW, expands markets | 34 Luger taped with WWF belt before Wrestlemania |
| 15 Bob Backlund wins WWF Title after push as heel | 35 Hart and Luger co-winners of Royal Rumble |
| 16 Lawler plea bargains rape charge to misdemeanor | 36 Thunder in Paradise lasts less than one season |
| 17 WWF launches New Generation campaign | 37 Roddy Piper returns for King of the Ring vs. Lawler |
| 18 Bret Hart wins WWF Title at Wrestlemania | 38 Crockett begins promoting, lacks impact |
| 19 AAA continues to draw well in Los Angeles | 39 Douglas-Funk-Sabu go 60 minutes in Philadelphia |
| 20 Shane Douglas wins NWA Title belt, then rejects it | 40 Ted DiBiase returns to WWF as a heel manager |
| 21 AAA finds moderate success in N.Y., Chicago | 41 Steiners leave WWF and wrestle only in Japan |
| 22 WWF finds success with house show "tour" format | 42 Rock & Roll win loser leaves town match vs. Bodies |
| 23 Ventura wins \$810,000 lawsuit over WWF royalties | 43 Thrill Seekers fail to spark SMW territory |
| 24 USWA draws 8,000 for Memories card, high of year | 44 Shane Douglas criticizes Flair on ECW TV |
| 25 SMW draws 4,100 in Knoxville, all-time high crowd | 45 Cactus stars in three PPVs, then leaves WCW on own |
| 26 Michaels-Ramon ladder match steals show at WM | 46 Cornette threatens journalists, bashes car window |
| 27 NY Daily News reports Hogan faked HIV blood test | 47 Flair vs. Steamboat 60 min. draw 5/29 in Charlotte |
| 28 After Vader series, Flair turns heel on Steamboat | 48 WCW reveals finish of Sting-Flair on TV before PPV |
| 29 WCW's Shaw, Bischoff say they'll overtake WWF | 49 Chris Candido wins revamped NWA World Title |
| 30 Ventura leaves WCW after Heenan takes his slot | 50 Tonya Harding negotiates with All Japan Women |

COMMENTS Chuck Austin winning an injury lawsuit over the WWF after being paralyzed for life after ring accident made promoters worldwide question their liability should an injury occur... Ric Flair taking over as booker was supposed to prevent him from being walked on, but even without Dusty Rhodes ordering it Flair does one job after another... Gangstas gimmick develops into a blacks vs. whites angle as Cornette turns babyface late in the year to team with longtime nemesis tag team. Gangstas comments commended for their bravado by some, criticized as hate-mongering by others... Paul Heyman remains ECW booker throughout '94, is made 50 percent partner with Tod Gordon, and expands ECW to Sunshine Network, MSG Network, and more. ECW is regarded as one of hippest promotions in world thanks to a variety of styles displayed in the ring, an innovative TV show, and progressive angles... The bland Bob Backlund becomes one of the most compelling characters all year. Holds belt briefly; can no longer say he never lost title to Iron Sheik... Had Lawler been convicted of statutory rape, it would have changed face of USWA. Instead, after cooling off period, WWF welcomes him back... WWF New Generation campaign is a public admission that WCW was making strides in terms of public perception... Bret Hart surprises many by being given another title victory at Wrestlemania. Beats Yokozuna who beat Lex Luger earlier in card to advance to match vs. Bret... AAA/IWC draws well in Los Angeles, but fails to develop regular routine or take advantage of momentum... Shane Douglas wins

NWA World Title Tournament, but surprises NWA officials in attendance by throwing down NWA belt and rejecting it; all was planned by ECW promoters unbeknownst to other NWA promoters... AAA/IWC explores Chicago, N.Y. as new markets, but only runs one show in each market... WWF hits arenas after Wrestlemania with "Wrestlemania Revenge Tour," has success, and goes with tour format rest of year. Format includes fan participation, special lighting, and giveaways... Jesse Ventura wins major courtroom victory over video tape royalties that caused WWF to reevaluate its royalty system... USWA draws best crowd in years for "Memphis Memories" card with many past Memphis headliners returning for one big night... SMW has similar success with "Night of the Legends" featuring many former eastern Tennessee headliners... Ladder match at Wrestlemania takes Shawn Michaels and Razor Ramon to new level... Reports of Hogan having someone else take his HIV test makes headlines, but not allowed as evidence at McMahon trial... Flair turns from family man in feud with Vader to cocky womanizer in feud with Steamboat, his first major move as booker... WCW's Bill Shaw and Eric Bischoff tell media that WCW will overtake the WWF during 1994... WCW pays Ventura to sit out rest of his contract as Bobby Heenan hosts WCW Saturday Night instead... WWF tries to expand into Japan market but finds lukewarm response, doesn't make plans to return... Missy Hiatt makes headlines on tabloid TV shows with sexual harassment claims against WCW, including explicit accounts of actions of

Gene Okerlund and Eric Bischoff... Sid Vicious proves to be steady employee for USWA, holds belt for last half of year. Improves in the ring and behind the mic... WWF fakes out wrestling press by taping segment with Lex Luger being announced as WWF Champion at pre-Wrestlemania TV taping. Footage never airs... Co-winners of Rumble sets up three way mini-tournament at Wrestlemania... Hogan's series flops on TV... Piper-Lawler make fans question the "New Generation" campaign... Jim Crockett breaks with Paul Heyman, runs small time bland regional promotion... 60 minute three-way match draws rave reviews... DiBiase becomes number one manager in WWF... Does Steiners' absence make heart grow fonder?... Highlight of year for SMW is post-match interview with Jim Cornette and Bodies... Thrill Seekers don't turn into "next Rock & Roll Express" as Cornette hoped... Douglas takes personal gripes with Flair to airwaves... Cactus steals show, then leaves WCW on his own... Jim Cornette responds to harsh criticism of his promoting with even harsher violent threats over the phone to *Torch* editor and columnist and 900 line host. Later bashes in windshield of former SMW employee K.C. O'Connor when O'Connor refuses to turn over SMW camera until he is paid money he says is owed to him. Felony charges only brought against Cornette on windshield incident, out of court settlement reached... One more 60 minute dance for Flair and Steamboat... Another WCW glitch shows they have way to go before overtaking WWF... Candido wins the NWA Title? What's the NWA?

1994 PRO WRESTLING TORCH AWARDS

1. AMERICAN MVP

Bret Hart



The following pages feature the results of the "1994 Pro Wrestling Torch Awards" poll. The results were compiled from hundreds of ballots from Torch readers across the world. A first place vote received 3 points, a second place vote 2 points, and a third place vote 1 point. This year's list of the top ten vote getters is followed by a list of the top three winners in past years' polls. Randomly selected reader comments on awards are then followed by columnists' and editor's picks and comments...

AWARD COMMENTS

Paul Meles: Sabu clearly wins out on this award. Over the last year, Sabu has completely rejuvenated my interest in wrestling. I don't know of anyone who has seen him wrestle once who hasn't immediately become a Sabu fanatic. Sabu's wrestling and aerial talents can turn any casual fan into a hardcore fanatic by just watching one of his matches. Shane Douglas and Terry Funk follow.

Cathi Nelson: Vader has it all. His style and work ethic really make you want to watch his matches.

Mike Omansky: Hulk Hogan is a clear number one. There can be no argument on his effect on WCW pay-per-view buyrates or Clash ratings with or without Ric Flair. Hulk has given WCW a new lease on life. Whether they can capitalize

on the opportunity is another story. Second goes to Bob Backlund who thanks to a killer heel role received more fan heat than any face or heel in the WWF in the latter half of 1994. Third goes to Razor Ramon who has the charisma and in-ring ability and is one of the few stars of either major American organization who can sell tickets.

Sheldon Goldberg: Forgetting his WCW stint (an easy thing to do), Terry Funk showed that he could not only produce great matches, but great matches that mean something. His performance in the Feb. 5 Triangular match with Shane Douglas and Sabu made Douglas a star and ECW a legitimate force on the American wrestling scene. If you put any other wrestler into that match instead of Terry Funk, it wouldn't have worked. No other man made as big a positive difference for a U.S. office as Terry Funk did for ECW. For that reason, Terry Funk is the American wrestler of the year, proving once again that he is the heart and soul of pro wrestling.

Matt Riley: Try to picture ECW without Sabu and the picture's not as pretty. His being unsigned may be a catch-22. If he stays, he's his own boss, but a big league could hamper his style.

Mark Golden: Big Daddy Cool, the first man in history to win the WWF Triple Crown in one

year gets my vote. Bret Hart was not only a Rumble winner but world champ also. To me Stunning Steve was the man and no one could stop him. That was until the birth of F.O.H.

Jeff Sureff: In the 1950s it was Buddy Rogers, in the 1960s it was Verne Gagne and Bruno Sammartino, in the 1970s it was Superstar Graham, Nick Bockwinkel, and Bruno Sammartino, and in the '80s it was Ric Flair. In 1994, Shane Douglas began making the '90s his decade.

Joe Romanell: Flair would have been number one if he would not have spent the second half of the year being a job-boy for Hogan.

Tony Martin: Shawn was MVP without even wrestling much during the year. Every time he did or said anything he was entertaining.

Gary Miller: Sabu has worked harder than any other wrestler in '94. He wrestled with various injuries and it doesn't matter whether he's working in a 200 seat or 2,000 seat arena, he always tries to put on a good match.

Chris Clark: Bret Hart is the top dog because he brought versatility, credibility, and stability to the often paper thin WWF. Shane Douglas is number two because he truly is "The Franchise" for ECW. Vader rounds out the top three because he is one of the few rock solid WCW wrestlers.

Gregory Vassiles: I only saw one ECW program this year, but the Sabu vs. Funk match on that show was enough to convince me that Sabu is the year's best flyer.

Charles Barnette: Bret Hart was the WWF in 1994. Hart carried every WWF pay-per-view event in '94. Razor Ramon gets second for his role in two of the best matches of the year and he was over enough to almost win this award. Third goes to Diesel for holding every strap in the WWF and for being the MVP the last part of the year.

Chris Gryscavage: Bret Hart seems genuinely friendly when he greets fans after matches. His matches are always interesting to watch. He's become my favorite wrestler.

Paul Kamrar: Without Bret Hart the WWF would not survive. Shawn Michaels is the greatest personality in the sport and gives the best ring performance.

Steve James: Bret Hart was my top choice because although he didn't have the most spectacular year, he was the steadiest main event wrestler and his popularity never waned. Razor Ramon was second because he was in some of the best matches of the year and won most of them. Shawn Michaels gets third place because

1. Bret Hart (38%)

2. Sabu (25%)

3. Ric Flair (22%)

4. Shawn Michaels (8%)

5. Diesel (4%)

6-10) Vader, Owen Hart, Shane Douglas, Razor Ramon, Hulk Hogan

PAST WINNERS:

1993: Vader, Ric Flair, Bret Hart, Sting

1992: Ric Flair, Rick Rude, Bret Hart

1991: Ric Flair, Bret Hart, Cactus Jack

1990: Ric Flair, Hulk Hogan, Sting

1989: Ric Flair, Terry Funk, Lex Luger

1988: Ric Flair, Ted DiBiase, Randy Savage

he was impressive throughout the year both in the ring and behind the microphone. This shows what kind of year it was in wrestling when the top three choices all come from the WWF.

Jason Koch: Ric Flair proved his loyalty and work ethic by retiring, even though he didn't necessarily agree with the means.

R.C. Price: Sabu and Cactus Jack seemed to energize every arena in which they worked. Jack is as great a performer as he is a literate spokesman for the sport as you could want, but I think you have to go with a player in the Big Two for the top prize, and that would have to be Shawn Michaels. He was in the middle of just about everything interesting that happened in the WWF, including its best match and the ascendancy of its latest "hulk," and he is the most marketable example of its "new generation" pitch. And he epitomizes the time-honored tradition of pro wrestling's best heel gimmick: a good looking smart ass (who can flat-out work)

Allan Greenberg: Sabu get's first. Why not? He won't be here to vote for December 31, 1995.

David Frey: Shawn Michaels is great on interviews, workrate, and bumps and was part of the match of the year (ladder match). And he is a good color commentator. Unfortunately, the term "Total Package" has already been used.

Shane White: I give Ric Flair the number one spot more out of respect than because of what was done with him. Douglas gets two for the great job he has done in ECW.

Christopher Cressman: Bret Hart's workrate is second to none. Wrestlemania X is proof. Flair

gets second place for keeping the WCW Title afloat before Hulk Hogan sunk it.

Marty Campbell: Sabu has shown consistently he is the top draw on the independent scene and could easily be built up as the cornerstone for the WWF and WCW in the years to come. With his diversity of opponents and solid workrate Bret Hart stands out as one of the top three stars in the WWF. Despite his misuse throughout a strong portion of 1994, Vader has worked several notches above his opponents and should be given another run as WCW Champion.

Scott Whitt: Even though I don't like him, Hulk Hogan works good for his 15 minutes and fans love him.

Ted Bauer: Bret Hart gets number one for carrying most of the pay-per-views this year for the WWF. Hulk Hogan gets number two because without Hogan, we would be watching rehashed matches all over again in WCW. Ric Flair gets number three for doing jobs to Hogan so gracefully.

David Elam: Shawn Michaels is the best wrestler in the world today. I've seen him live three times in the past year and he has yet to disappoint. He talks to the fans at ringside and is very funny. He was in two match of the year candidates. He is simply the best.

Andy Johnson: Sabu was the MVP in America for 1994 because he never had a match that was below four stars no matter who his opponent was. He gave 110 percent whether 10 or 10,000 people were in the building. Second place goes to Cactus Jack who like Sabu can have a great match with just about anybody. This year he had his best opponents and matches since 1991 and the Eddie Gilbert wars. Third place goes to Shane Douglas. Even though he may not be on every ECW show, he always makes his presence felt when he is there.

Chuck Mullen: Michaels has it all and his forth coming title reign will be extremely successful and his stock will shoot through the roof.

Harley York: Sabu is without a doubt the future of wrestling. The man is in his own category. I have seen but four of his matches. However, all were great whether his opponent was a brawler like Cactus or an aerial specialist such as Too Cold (who eventually should claim a place with Sabu as one of the top wrestlers of this decade). There was also the tremendous ladder match with the solid independent worker Al Snow who like Sabu would be getting greater exposure in a just world. Sabu and Snow worked their asses off, doing moves the likes of which I have not seen before or since, both on and off the ladder. Sabu simply gives his all and then some. He sells so well that it's often hard to tell whether

he's really hurt, but we all know that he has been injured quite a bit. If Sabu can remain healthy for a while, American fans might get the opportunity to be amazed by him on a larger scale than a few hundred in a gym in Michigan or the ECW hardcore.

Eric McHugh: Sabu has earned a reputation as a maniac, a high-flyer, suicidal, homicidal, genocidal, dedicated, and one who would do a top rope legdrop onto a table (and not necessarily one with a wrestler on top of it) in front of 1,000 or 10 people. His name is wrestling. Cactus Jack is Sabu before Jack smartened up a little. I gave a speech in a college course in pro wrestling and included a clip from 1990 of Jack falling off the ring apron and landing flat on the concrete. Five people had to turn their heads. Can you imagine if I had a Sabu clip at the time? Dustin Rhodes and Bret Hart tie for third.

Geoff Kleinert: Sabu is the only wrestler, even through injury, who was consistently great this year. That's why he's a runaway first.

James Baker: Ric Flair dominated in '94 with note-worthy matches against Sting, Steamboat, and a couple of three to four star matches against Hulk Hogan. Also, doing a job for Hogan puts him in MVP status (lifetime membership) for me.

David P. Wallace: Bret Hart was the best WWF Champion I have ever seen. It's a shame that he didn't have more matches against good workers like Shawn Michaels, 1-2-3 Kid, and Jeff Jarrett. The Feud with Owen should have ended long ago, but it appears it will continue to run for quite some time.

Annette Boyer: Bret sets a standard that many wrestlers would do well to model themselves after. By far, Bret carried the WWF this year.

Barry Johnson: There really wasn't one outstanding star in the U.S. this year, but since Bret Hart put forth several great performances this year, I gave him the top spot. I chose ECW pride and joy, Sabu, just ahead of Shane Douglas simply because Sabu is more versatile and volatile than anyone in the business.

Matt Grady: Bret Hart was the best wrestler in the WWF this year. He had two great matches against Owen Hart and did an excellent job by making Owen Hart and Bob Backlund seem like feared challengers. Flair gets second for carrying WCW in the first half of the year. He also had great interviews throughout the year. Who worked harder than anyone else this year? Sabu did. He is the best wrestler in the independent leagues and helped make ECW what it is today.

Dave Goldberg: Ric Flair deserves MVP this year. From January to June there wasn't a better wrestler than Ric Flair. Then a washed-up

egomaniac came in and destroyed progress in WCW. Flair always gave his best, even against a ballooned Barry Windham.

Bob Nichnadowicz: Vader has to be the winner. He always gives 100 percent, even when he has been injured. His squash matches are even good. Always a great and intimidating interview and he's one of the few heels that, no matter what great moves he performs, the fans continue to ate.

Patrick Kenney: Shawn Michaels is the best in the U.S., period. He is the real total package who is a more athletic version of Flair. Sabu continues to amaze and Funk gets third based on his ring skills that have only improved with each year, coupled with his work against Douglas and Sabu.

Jeff Gagliardo: Flair, Sabu, and Funk. Flair was as equally responsible as Hogan for that feud drawing. Only difference is, Flair can work. Sabu was the best wrestler in the U.S. this year and worked his butt off on every independent card he wrestled despite crowd size. As for the Funker, he's mainly responsible for ECW's success because by doing jobs he turned Shane Douglas and The Public Enemy into superstars (although Paul E.'s booking didn't hurt, either).

Robert Solari II: He flies through the air with the greatest of ease breaking tables and chairs with his knees. Sabu finally caught on with a larger audience in 1994. His idea of a bad match is a career night for most people. Among the sea of lies about the WWF's "New Generation," Shawn Michaels is one of the few lifeboats available. He might even wear the WWF World Title in 1995. Shane Douglas went from a mid-card performer to ECW's Ric Flair.

Jason Grace: If anyone can single-handedly save American wrestling, it will be Sabu. How many people in the business anymore give it more than 100 percent every night no matter how small the crowd is or how injured he is. While some of his stunts border on suicidal, he makes me proud to be a fan. Ric Flair did everything possible to make his opponents look good, even a useless Barry Windham and a more than pathetic Hulk Hogan. If Shawn Michaels had wrestled more this year I would have named him the WWF MVP, but Bret Hart gets the nod for (at least at pay-per-views) at least trying.

Jeff Cohen (of N.Y.): Bret Hart, Ric Flair, and Rick Steamboat. Until the word "workrate" jumped out at me in the criteria for this category, Hogan was going to be my choice because he juiced WCW to the point of competition with the WWF.

Will Hartke: Diesel rose from being a WCW jobber to WWF Champion in just one and a half years. It shows that the company has faith in Nash by giving him three titles in one year. Michaels

has the charisma to take the WWF higher than Hogan could. He needs to win the WWF strap soon. Flair is the ultimate company man. Being Hogan's job boy cost him points, but he still made third.

Tim Dills: Bret Hart rarely disappoints on pay-per-views. The feud with Owen provided some good drama for these events. 1995 will be Shawn Michaels's year to finally step into the WWF spotlight. Vader spent '94 in the shadows but still was quite a force.

Eddie Goldman: 1994 was the year of Sabu. He energized wrestling in the U.S. like no other. his daredevil, almost suicidal style set the pace for ECW. His devotion to wrestling and workrate were unmatched, whether before the television cameras or at an indy show in a small gym. He has taken pro wrestling to yet another level. I just really hope he doesn't injure himself too seriously in the process.

Betty Schaffer: Bret Hart earns the honor primarily because when he's on a major show, you know it's going to be a good match.

Lloyd Lea: God bless Cactus, Sabu, Terry Funk, etc.—the boys who bust their asses and go the extra mile for me and all the other "marks" who couldn't care less about how many stars a match gets. Thanks guys!

Chris Zavisa: The best thing on the domestic shores was Michigan native Sabu. Whether it was in a bingo hall in Philadelphia or in some high school in Michigan, Sabu gave more to the fans than any other wrestler in this country. If truth be told, he gave more than any three other wrestlers in this country. He has a drive to succeed that forces him to have the best match every night regardless of what he has to do to attain it. He has more charisma than just about anyone I can think of working Stateside. And his ability in the ring is among the best. I had my doubts about ECW centering itself around Shane Douglas but he proved he was up to the task. His work was good and his interviews very strong. Second place goes to Shane Douglas. No worthy choice for third.

Bruce Mitchell: Bret Hart carried a year's worth of WWF pay-per-view shows with consistently excellent performances. Ric Flair gets second as he had three energetic, great matches against Hulk Hogan. Third goes to Sabu, who had a lot of masochistic, memorable bouts around the country.

Wade Keller: Bret Hart gets the first pick for being a stable, credible foundation during a tremulous year in the WWF. Cactus Jack gets second for being the best and hardest worker at times on cards for three different promotions during the year. Sabu gets third.

2. JAPANESE MVP

"Dr. Death" Steve Williams

**1. Steve Williams
(34%)**

**2. Kenta Kobashi
(29%)**

**3. Toshiaki Kawada
(27%)**

4. Atsushi Onita (5%)

5. Great Sasuke (5%)

**6-10) Mitsuharu Miasawa,
Nobuhiko Takada, Shinya
Hashimoto, Manami Toyota,
Hiroshi Hase**

PAST WINNERS:

1993: Kobashi, Stan Hansen, Jushin Liger

1992: Liger, Kobashi, Toyota

1991: Liger, Jumbo Tsuruta, Kobashi

1990: Liger, Keiji Muto, Tsuruta

1989: Akira Maeda, Genichiro Tenryu, Liger

Andy Johnson: Atsushi Onita gets the award for this year because of his sheer guts. He may not be a great technical wrestler like Misawa or Kawada, but he is one helluva brawler. He also benefited from having good talent to face such as Yukihiro Kanemura, Mr. Pogo, Mitsuhiro Matsunaga, and The Gladiator. The second place goes to the Great Sasuke because he really shined this year against the likes of Chris Benoit and Jushin Liger. He showed he is the best flier there is worldwide. Third goes to Jushin Liger who probably would have won this award had he not been injured.

Chuck Mullen: Great Sasuke must be put against Sabu—then we would have our first six star match.

Sheldon Goldberg: A tough category to choose a winner because there were a number of them who had a great year in 1994. Kawada takes the top spot simply because he had the greatest matches and ended the year with the Triple Crown Title. Great Sasuke is a close second. He

too was involved in some great matches, especially his performance in the Sup J Cup tournament, which solidified his place as a major star on the Japanese scene. Akira Hokuto, in her "retirement" year, most visibly led women's wrestling in Japan to new heights. Though this was perhaps not her best year in the ring, it's the year she'd had the biggest impact.

Mark Golden: Pound for pound, Chris Benoit is the best wrestler in the world. Second goes to Steve Williams who has done more in Japan than most American wrestlers have done in their careers. Liger is third and still amazing.

Robert O'Connor: I chose Steve Williams because he had more four to five star bouts over the past year than almost anyone, which is an incredible feat for a man of his size.

James Zordani: Atsushi Onita because he carries FMW on his back. People got to see him, not any of the other FMW stars. Steve Williams is so much better in Japanese rings than he ever was in the U.S.

Jeff Gagliardo: Kawada finally surpassed Kobashi as the best worker in All Japan this year. Whether he wrestled greats like Williams or stiffes like Baba, he made his opponent look good while making himself look tough at the same time, all the while having four star matches. Second goes to the czar of FMW, Onita. Third goes to Kobashi, whose Steamboat-like facial expressions can turn the deadeast of crowds anywhere he goes.

Robert Solari II: Great Sasuke best filled the void opened by Jushin Liger's injury. He really got over the new "Japan-Lucha" style and steals the show whenever he wrestles. Dr. Death really stepped up the pace of his improvement in the ring. Williams's ascension to the main event status has helped to break up the monotony of All Japan cards. And 1995 looks to be more of the same, assuming Doc doesn't go to jail for killing Kobashi first. Onita places third because basically he is FMW. Without him after May watch attendance plummet.

Jason Grace: Great Sasuke is like Japan's Sabu. Cooperation with New Japan helped save Inoki and company from a truly disappointing year. However, I hope Sasuke and Sabu have really good insurance policies. Chris Benoit can be any promotions' MVP if he so desires. Takada

brings such realism and respect for his sport that even in putting Vader over he makes himself look good.

Eddie Goldman: Toshiaki Kawada and Akira Hokuto get first and second, but Ken Wayne Shamrock gets third for being the chief star of the ensemble cast that shot Pancrase to the center of attention in Japan.

Chris Zavisa: Great Sasuke, Kenta Kobashi, and Manami Toyota. Michinoku Pro went from literally nowhere to being one of the world's hot promotions. The one man who got them there more than anyone else was The Great Sasuke. It also helped when New Japan and Jushin Liger decided to make him a star and gave him a great spot and lots of TV and commercial tape coverage. Sasuke meant more to his promotion than any other wrestlers.

All Japan is blessed with many great wrestlers and perhaps the best is Kenta Kobashi. He has a big year with a pinfall victory over Stan Hansen and he and Misawa won the tag tournament for the second year in a row. Someday he will win the Triple Crown and 20 years from now we could be talking about him as one of the best of all time.

Manami Toyota is simply the best wrestler in a promotion that dominates its category like no other. She almost always has the best match and can do things that nobody else dares do. She can put several amazing moves together so quickly that at first you do not appreciate what she has just done.

Bruce Mitchell: Kenta Kobashi. He has no weaknesses, is athletically superb, with consistently great psychology—the best wrestler in the world. Steve Williams lived up to the challenge that Shohei Baba set before him. Third goes to Great Sasuke. His outstanding flying cemented the Michinoku Pro Wrestling company as a comer in Japan.

Wade Keller: Kobashi gets first for keeping his level of workrate and believability so high among so many more flashy, risk-oriented workers. Manami Toyota gets second for continuing to anchor an amazingly successful year in women's wrestling in Japan. Third goes to Shinya Hashimoto for surprising me by becoming a credible title holder despite his lack of many outstanding traits. Honorable mention to Williams and Takada for excellence in workrate.

3. MEXICAN MVP

"Love Machine" Art Barr

1. Art Barr (48%)
2. Konnan (31%)
3. Perro Aguayo (8%)
4. Rey Misterio Jr. (5%)
5. Psicosis (3%)

6-10) Eddy Guerrero, El Hijo del Santo, Octagon, Negro Casas, La Parka

PAST WINNERS:

1992: Blue Panther, Konnan, Canadian Vampire

1993: Konnan, Misterio Jr., Cien Caras

Sheldon Goldberg: Art Barr, if only posthumously, deserves some award for overcoming adversities and becoming an international star.

Barry Johnson: I didn't see a substantial amount of AAA/IWC this year, but from what I saw, Art Barr was on the verge of superstardom when his untimely death struck. May God bless his family and friends, for the wrestling business has lost a great competitor, and friend.

Steve James: Art Barr was great in the ring and with his heel antics. He will be sorely missed. Konnan showed that either as a babyface or a heel he is the top attraction for AAA. La Parka's work in the ring showed that he is not just another poor wrestler with a silly gimmick. He has great potential and could challenge Konnan for the top main event spot.

Alan Greenberg: Art Barr's rise was one of the more refreshing surprises in years.

Eddie Goldman: Art Barr. No one generated as much heat, created as much excitement, or dedicated himself more to wrestling in Mexico than Love Machine. Arts legacy is that hard work is worth it. His type of work ethic is rare in today's climate of cultural and economic stagnation and decline. And he will be sorely missed. Vampiro is the top babyface in Mexico. His work is less known here because of EMLL's

limited exposure to hardcores. But his charisma plus always improving workrate and repertoire of moves makes him likely to explode on the world scene in '95.

Andy Johnson: Love Machine gets number one because he was the number one heel in all of Mexico and he was one of the hardest workers ever. Number two goes to Konnan who continues to sellout most shows he is on. He is the future of AAA. Third goes to Perro Aguayo who also still has strong drawing power in Mexico, despite limited skills.

Chuck Mullen: Love Machine is extremely missed. Konnan will have to turn babyface if Aguayo does retire.

Sheldon Goldberg: The late Art Barr's work of 1994 will be looked on in the history books as the major turning point for lucha libre becoming a truly international wrestling style. As his partner, Eddy Guerrero is my second choice. Vampiro made huge improvement in the ring in 1994, having some great matches for EMLL which went a long way in advancing the Mexican style to more of a "world style."

Douglas Gruener: I felt miserable when I heard of Art's death. He was quickly becoming one of the best heels in the world.

Bob Nichnadowicz: Art Barr blew everyone in Mexico away. He went from "The Juicer" to perhaps the best heel in the world. Considering he had only been a heel for one and a half years and hadn't even reached his peak yet, he had a chance to be one of the all-time greats. People always praise those who pass away at a young age, but Art Barr certainly deserves those accolades.

James Zordani: Love Machine was the best wrestler I saw in AAA. He generated heat, was a great workers, and you could argue he was the best heel in the world in 1994. Rey Misterio Jr. thrills me every time I see him.

Robert Solari II: Art Barr was Mr. AAA in 1994, the driving force behind the Gringos Locos and was on the verge of getting lucha libre over to an American audience. Perro Aguayo gets the most out of what limited skills he has. Hey, anyone who can get a pretty lady to kiss him while he looks like he just climbed out of a traffic

accident gets my vote. Rey Misterio Jr. is the 1-2-3 Kid minus a foot in height and 60 pounds. What he does in the ring is incredible and the best part is, he can't legally drink in most U.S. States yet.

Gregory Vassiles: Love Machine. The Mexico MVP award is more meaningful than the American MVP. No American, including Hogan, carried any U.S. promotion this year. American wrestling in general lacked any heat and drama.

David Layne: Terry Funk had another incredible year. He was involved in key matches in SMW, ECW, many independents, and even worked hard in WCW. He worked harder than many wrestlers half his age. How many 50 year olds take those bumps, much less add moonsaults to their repertoire at that age? If more people in wrestling had his attitude, the business in the U.S. would be in much better shape.

Chris Zavisa: Art Barr, Psicosis, and Rey Misterio Jr. Barr was the best heel in Mexico and when he worked in the States as well. He did not have the fluid grace of many other workers including his own tag partner, but he certainly knew how to work a match and more importantly, how to work a crowd. He was the difference on many cards and he helped AAA get over so big.

Psicosis is one wrestler you never watch with the fast forward button and often are forced to use the rewind and slow-motion to see what crazy stunt he attempted. He is in a class with Sabu and Sasuke.

Rey Misterio is pound for pound and inch for inch the best thing in wrestling going today. Unfortunately, he is short on those pounds and inches and will always be underrated for that. Regardless, he is a true joy to watch.

Bruce Mitchell: Art Barr. Sadly, the key performer in AAA's success. Simply a great year in the ring that ended so sadly. Konnan. Check out his ring entrance during "When World's Collide." The man is a true star. Rey Misterio Jr.—state of the art in flying.

Wade Keller: Art Barr was by far the most valuable player to his promotion in the world. Konnan is second and was also invaluable to AAA in 1994. Third goes to La Parka for his rise in popularity and status throughout the year.

4. MATCH OF THE YEAR

Ramon vs. Michaels

1. Michaels vs. Ramon 3/20 (53%)

2. Barr & Guerrero vs. Santo & Octagon 11/6 (20%)

3. Owen vs. Bret 3/20 (10%)

4. Nastys vs. Jack & Sullivan 5/22 (8%)

5. Flair vs. Hogan 7/17 (5%)

6-10) Sabu-Funk-Douglas 2/5, Flair vs. Steamboat 4/17, Jack & Payne vs. Nastys 4/17, Michaels & Diesel vs. Kid & Ramon 10/19, Bret vs. Kid 7/1

PAST WINNERS:

1993: Vader vs. Flair, Vader vs. Cactus, Vader vs. Sting

1992: Pillman vs. Liger, Royal Rumble, WarGames, Vader vs. Sting

1991: Sting & Lex Luger vs. Rick & Scott Steiner, Bret Hart vs. "Mr. Perfect" Curt Hennig, Rick Steamboat & Dustin Rhodes vs. Larry Zbyszko & Arn Anderson

1990: Bobby Eaton & Stan Lane vs. Tracy Smothers & Steve Armstrong, Hulk Hogan vs. Ultimate Warrior, Nasty Boys vs. Rick & Scott Steiner

1989: Ric Flair vs. Rick Steamboat (2/20), Flair vs. Steamboat (4/2), Flair vs. Steamboat (5/7)

1988: Ric Flair vs. Sting, Bobby Fulton & Tommy Rogers vs. Bobby Eaton & Stan Lane, Ric Flair vs. Lex Luger

Christopher Cressman: Ramon vs. Michaels blew everyone away. It's rare to see a WWF match that had both brutality and great ringwork. Bret vs. Owen in the cage at SummerSlam was more of a race than a match, but it had a great storyline.

Ted Bauer: Number one easily goes to the ladder match at Wrestlemania. It was enthralling and will set the standard for a long time to come on how pay-per-view matches should be done. Bret vs. Owen on that same card gets number two for crowd heat and matwork. A surprising number three is the Austin vs. Badd match at the June Clash because both men worked very well together.

Andy Johnson: The best match of the year in the U.S. was Machine & Guerrero vs. Santo & Octagon at When Worlds Collide. It had everything that a great match should including action, drama, and suspense. Second goes to Cactus Jack & Kevin Sullivan vs. The Nasty Boys at Slamboree. It was a classic brawl that I will remember for some time. Cactus suplexed a table on Jerry Sags who later had a guitar broken over his head.

Chuck Mullen: Basically any Michaels vs. Ramon match on camera rocks. I see King of the Ring as a five star showdown. These two work excellent together.

Paul Meles: The Feb. 5 ECW triangular match between Funk, Douglas, and Sabu was the greatest match I have ever witnessed. The combination of wrestling, brawling, aerial maneuvers, and ring psychology during this match sets it apart from any other match that I have ever seen. My second choice is The Public Enemy vs. Terry & Dory Funk in a barbed wire match. Third goes to Cactus Jack vs. Sabu on June 24.

Mike Omansky: Backlund vs. Hart wins for drama and planning. If I were to go on best wrestling mixed with drama, I'd go with the Michaels vs. Ramon ladder match at Wrestlemania.

Sheldon Goldberg: Both the triangle match in ECW and the hair match at When World's Collide were matches that represented major turning points for each respective group. The Triangular Match gets the top spot, because it set up Shane Douglas and Sabu as true standard

bearers to carry ECW into the future thanks to Terry Funk. Santo & Octagon vs. Barr & Guerrero was a turning point match for AAA/IWC and a legacy in the case of the late Art Barr. The impact of this match will be more profoundly felt in a year or two, when AAA/IWC becomes a bit more entrenched in the U.S. wrestling scene outside of California.

Sheldon Goldberg: Wrestlemania X was an unexpected treat for most and an unexpected delight for those ready to give up on them. Ramon vs. Michaels and Bret vs. Owen were the top two.

Mark Golden: Cactus & Sullivan vs. Nastys at Slamboree was a classic. It's hard to believe that two months later Hulkamania changed WCW into the one thing it tried so hard not to be... WWF.

Bob Nichnadowicz: I find that I am generally disappointed by "gimmick matches," but the Michaels-Ramon ladder match absolutely blew me away. For months, Michaels carried Ramon to great matches, but on that night Ramon put it all together and showed that all those years waiting for him to become a star had arrived.

David Frey: The ladder match from Wrestlemania was unbelievable! The genius of this match is that, unlike Cactus Jack, they were not trying to get hurt, it just looked that way.

Bruce Mitchell: 1. Santo & Octagon vs. Eddy Guerrero & Art Barr. This dramatic, exciting match featured the best booking I have ever seen. The wrestling lived up to and surpassed the suspense. This match had no flaws. 2. Shawn Michaels vs. Razor Ramon. Michaels put on a tour de force performance and Ramon raised his level of work. Simply the best ever Wrestlemania match. 3. Rock & Roll Express vs. The Heavenly Bodies, Bluegrass Brawl, Apr. 1. The work was in the four and a half star range, but the emotion was five stars. The SMW product at its absolute finest.

Wade Keller: The only match I thought was five stars in the U.S. all year was Razor Ramon vs. Shawn Michaels. The match established both Michaels and Ramon as legitimate franchise prospects. For many reasons, Art Barr & Eddy Guerrero vs. Santo & Octagon comes in second. Third goes to Flair vs. Hogan for its quality and significance of being their first national meeting.

5. BEST HEEL OF THE YEAR

Bob Backlund

**1. Bob Backlund
(27%)**

**2. Shawn Michaels
(20%)**

**3. Shane Douglas
(14%)**

4. Owen Hart (14%)

5. Vader (10%)

**6-10 Ric Flair, Sandman, Lord
Steven Regal, Gangstas, Steve
Austin**

PAST WINNERS:

1993: Vader, Jerry Lawler, Shawn Michaels

1992: Rick Rude, Ric Flair, Van Vader

1991: Jake Roberts, The Undertaker, Ric Flair

1990: Ric Flair, Stan Hansen, Curt Hennig

1989: Terry Funk, Lex Luger, Randy Savage

1988: Ted DiBiase, Barry Windham, Eddie Gilbert

Robert Hammond: No matter how much traditional WCW fans cheered for Flair against Hogan, nobody can deny how great Flair's heel persona was. Considering Hogan was in charge, Flair's work behind the mic and in the ring was still awesome.

Christopher Cressman: Owen Hart was the only heel I could really hate. His interviews were great. Backlund gets second place for talking the lunatic gimmick and making it work.

Dave Goldberg: Bob Backlund is one of the best heels I've seen in a long time. I don't think anyone has improved more in a change to a heel than Backlund has. Who would have thought an old man like Backlund could become such a monster heel?

Ted Bauer: Owen Hart has to be number one because he was dragged from mid-card status

and did very well carrying the heel end of the brother feud. Austin gets number two because of his ever-improving status and classic highlights like his facial gestures at Fall Brawl. Vader gets number three for being sorely missed after Hogan's arrival, but still carrying all of his matches and being a brutal heel.

Andy Johnson: The fans had genuine hate for Art Barr and he almost caused a riot every time he came into a building. He was one of the best heels on the planet. He will be missed. Second goes to Shane Douglas who is what a great heel should be.

Chuck Mullen: The real Bob Backlund made the last half of the year for me. I need morality!

Eric McHugh: Bob Backlund's interviews, especially right after winning the title, absolutely planted him atop this category. The Sandman lights up cigarettes as he's beating people up. What more needs to be said? Diesel and Shawn Michaels as a unit tie for third. One wouldn't have worked as well without the other.

Richard Merritt: The best heels are the heels who get the most heat, can work with any face, and are great on interviews. The top three that fit that criteria are Shane Douglas, Steve Austin, and Shawn Michaels.

Cathi Nelson: Vader is first, but Steven Regal deserves credit. You want to slap Regal, but Vader sells tickets.

Mike Omansky: Bob Backlund, hands down. He has done an awesome job as a deranged psycho heel with wrestling ability. I never knew he had it in him and have been extremely impressed at every stage of the character development. I would have liked to see him with the strap for a while defending against the assorted faces of the WWF, which probably would have done decent house show business. Second goes to Ric Flair and third to Jeff Jarrett, who has become a charismatic, potentially very exciting heel character.

Sheldon Goldberg: In a year when its top stars couldn't get heat with a blow torch, Bob "Rush Limbaugh in Wrestling Tights" Backlund is the hottest heel in wrestling. Shawn Michaels and Jake Roberts follow.

Sheldon Goldberg: Douglas is best as he

continues to establish himself as a premiere talent, but Backlund's resurrection from white bread zero to despicable foe was unthinkable.

Mark Golden: Bob Backlund suddenly became the most over heel at the end of the year. Love Machine nearly caused a riot at the lucha pay-per-view. And third goes to Owen Hart. Any man who can trick his parents into ripping off his brother is a heel to me.

Marshal Goldberg: Loads of credit should go to Vince McMahon and Bob Backlund himself for making the most boring wrestler of our time into one of the most compelling and funny characters in years. Kudos to Shawn Michaels for those priceless "looks" when he is around Backlund.

Tony Martin: Owen was great as a heel all year. The pouty little brother gimmick really worked for him.

Greg Casterioto: Shane Douglas is the next Ric Flair.

James Stanius: Bob Backlund. Who would have thought of it. In 1994, Backlund became one of the greatest heels ever due to his interviews and awesome facial expressions. Love Machine gets second. He'll be missed for a long, long time.

Chris Zavisa: Art Barr, Shane Douglas, and Ric Flair. Barr was simply great in getting AAA over. He was the difference in involving the fans on many cards both in Mexico and in the States. He will be missed. Douglas did a very good job both in the ring and on the stick in ECW. Flair did everything he could do to make the Hogan vs. Flair feud a watchable event. Unfortunately he was hamstrung by an egomaniac who kept him on a very short leash.

Bruce Mitchell: Art Barr was redefining the role before his death. 2. Shawn Michaels was very entertaining as the cocky Deion Sanders type. Almost too likable, though. 3. Sabu was great as an absolute maniac.

Wade Keller: Sandman was the most convincing personality of all heels in wrestling, but Art Barr gets the nod over him for in-ring ability. Third goes to Shawn Michaels for being the class heel of the WWF.

6. BEST BABYFACE OF THE YEAR

"Hitman" Bret Hart

1. Bret Hart (40%)

2. Sting (23%)

3. Hulk Hogan (19%)

4. Undertaker (7%)

5. Razor Ramon (5%)

6-10) Cactus Jack, Konnan, Johnny B. Badd, Mikey Whipwreck, Ric Flair

PAST WINNERS:

1993: Bret Hart, Sting, Ric Flair

1992: Sting, Bret Hart, Randy Savage

1991: Hulk Hogan, Sting, Savage.

1990: Hulk Hogan, Sting, Lex Luger.

1989: Hulk Hogan, Ric Flair, Sting.

1988: Sting, Hulk Hogan, Savage.

Christopher Cressman: Undertaker is the guy fans pay to see in the WWF. The pops he gets from the crowds is usually the loudest and his ring entrance is the best since Hogan. Too bad his matches were lousy.

Martin Campbell: Bret Hart has built a strong base, in my opinion, as a strong yet vulnerable champion. In many ways he was the glue that helped sustain the WWF's fan base. Tracy Smothers has the skills, looks, and charisma to make it big in the WWF or WCW. Although taking a back seat upon Hulk Hogan's arrival, Sting is far more charismatic and talented than Hulk Hogan.

Ted Bauer: Bret Hart wins face of the year for his perennial main event status on pay-per-views and his mic work. Hogan gets number two for the sheer fact that due to his booking, he's really the only babyface in WCW you're allowed to notice. Razor Ramon gets number three for his ever-improving skills and matches against Michaels.

Andy Johnson: Although he may actually be a heel most of the time, Sabu is my top pick. No one has the crowd support he does. I'm sure Vince would love it if the fans cheered for Luger like they cheer Sabu. Cactus Jack gets second for the same reason as Sabu. Every time you see Cactus you can't help but hear the non-stop

chants of "Cactus, Cactus." Konnan gets third. The first half of the year he was the most popular wrestler in all of Mexico.

Eric McHugh: Sting is probably number one for life. I've considered him the top babyface for so long now I don't think anything can change it. Johnny B. Badd is number two for being incredibly popular and having a great babyface personality. His reaction upon winning the TV Title was as genuine as can be found in wrestling. Bret Hart places third for being the best babyface WWF Champion ever. Honorable mention goes to Tommy Dreamer for being the one ECW wrestler capable of garnering respect from an ECW crowd that initially loathed him. He's a true professional.

Jason Koch: Hulk Hogan did bring a level of excitement to the babyface camp that was lagging for a while.

Sheldon Goldberg: Hulk Hogan gets the nod since he had the most positive impact as a face for a U.S. office. Razor Ramon is a distant second. He had some very good matches this year, especially with Shawn Michaels, and probably got the biggest crowd pop overall this year for a guy in his position. I'd like to give Bret Hart a higher place than third. He sure gave it a great try, but he just didn't deliver the crowds on top, not that anybody else did either.

Sheldon Goldberg: Both Diesel and Jack are products of the fans through their own merits rather than the factory model babyface we all love to hate.

David Hardy: Perro Aguayo, despite his limited skill, gets the same reaction Bruno Sammartino did 20 years ago when I was a kid in Boston. As far as his working ability goes, if he blades that's good enough for me.

David Layne: Ricky Morton is the main reason the Rock & Roll Express are so over. His selling ability is remarkable. Bret Hart continues to be the only over face in the WWF. Bob Armstrong gets third thanks to drawing several large houses against Cornette in SMW.

Douglas Gruener: Razor Ramon and Cactus Jack. Both maintain their face images while not sacrificing the maturity of their characters by kissing the fans' butts.

Paul Meles: Sabu wins this award hands down. Terry Funk comes in second.

Paul Kamrar: Bret Hart, Rick Steamboat, and Diesel. Steamboat was so nice, he must be hiding something.

Kevin Kleinrock: Bret Hart, Diesel, and Sting. Diesel is a great choice for best babyface because he is the epitome of what hardcore fans want to see. With the trend ECW is setting with the face-heel line not so clear cut, not all black and white, a powerful brawler with some scientific skills can be a successful babyface. The Piper for the '90s.

Chris Clark: Once again Bret Hart was the best the big boys had to offer, but Johnny B. Badd was the surprise of the year. Badd is one of the few sparks of life in a dead and decaying WCW. Ramon rounds out the top three thanks to his year of success and consistency.

Bruce Mitchell: 1. Perro Aguayo played the proud, old warrior to perfection and is truly respected and loved by fans. 2. The Rock & Roll Express, particularly Ricky Morton, have a bond with their fans that make them an indispensable ingredient in SMW. 3. Bret Hart was the best of what remained.

Chris Zavisa: Sabu was cheered rabidly by almost every crowd he worked in front of. He is more over than any other worker in this country. He has much the same appeal that Onita has in Japan. Santo gets second for being loved by the crowd. His entrance with the recording of the children singing his theme song is one of my favorite moments in wrestling.

Wade Keller: One sign of a genuine babyface is when a promoter turns him heel and none of the fans comply and cheer the guy anyway. Cactus Jack was that man. His interviews were among the smartest in wrestling, his dedication in the ring was among the highest, and the fans responded to him during a match as well as they did to anyone. Second place goes to Mikey Whipwreck, who was the ultimate likable underdog character. He became a cult favorite in ECW Arena (although any favorite in ECW Arena is a "cult favorite"). Bret Hart and Razor Ramon are tied at third as both were the glue that held the WWF together as role model characters during a year of intense scrutiny.

7. BEST FEUD OF THE YEAR

Bret Hart vs. Owen Hart

1. Bret vs. Owen

2. Flair vs. Hogan

3. Michaels vs. Ramon

4. Bret vs. Backlund

5. Douglas vs. Funk vs. Sabu

6-10) Sabu vs. Jack, Sandman vs. Dreamer, Gangstas vs. Rock & Roll Express, Cactus Jack vs. Nastys, Gringos Locos vs. AAA

PAST WINNERS:

1993: Hart vs. Lawler, Jack vs. Vader, Sting vs. Vader

1992: Flair vs. Savage, Moondogs vs. Lawler & Jarrett, Vader vs. Sting

1991: Eddie Gilbert vs. Cactus Jack, Ric Flair vs. Hulk Hogan, Sting vs. Cactus Jack.

1990: Nasty Boys vs. The Steiners, Ric Flair vs. Sting, Jerry Lawler vs. Eddie Gilbert.

1989: Ric Flair vs. Terry Funk, Ric Flair vs. Rick Steamboat, Hulk Hogan vs. Randy Savage.

1988: Randy Savage vs. Ted DiBiase, The Fantastics vs. The Midnight Express, Jake Roberts vs. Rick Rude.

Andy Johnson: Every single match Cactus and Sabu had was unbelievable. From the first match in Philadelphia to the awesome rematch in Hamburg where Sabu broke his ribs and Cactus got a beer bottle broken over his head and all matches in between, they gave 100 percent every time out. The only other feud that even comes close to Cactus vs. Sabu was Terry Funk vs. Sabu. Their match at the WWN TV tapings was a classic that I will never forget. Sabu was in the best two feuds in wrestling this year. Do you see a coincidence?

Eric McHugh: Tommy Cairo-Sandman-Tommy Dreamer. Throw in their respective women and some Singapore canes and you have

the most volatile bouts I've ever seen. Second place goes to Cactus Jack & Maxx Payne vs. Nasty Boys.

Sheldon Goldberg: Vince McMahon vs. The U.S. Government. Okay, so it's not an in-ring feud. It drew more mainstream interest than anything in any U.S. ring and the right guy won.

Mark Golden: Jim Cornette vs. Bob Armstrong is the best and longest feud. The Harts feud was good but a little repetitive. The Stud Stable vs. Rhodes was third, but would have been better if WarGames had blood.

James Stanios: The Sabu-Cactus Jack feud reached a new plateau for violence in wrestling.

Gregory Vassiles: Owen vs. Bret. The feud seemed phony, despite great booking and good matches. Until the Survivor Series angle you never could really believe that the brothers hated each other. Maybe the feud can take off now. But it was the best of a bad list of options.

Michael Andrusis: I chose Bret vs. Owen over Flair vs. Hogan because of one simple reason, although they were both incredibly booked feuds. Owen was granted one thing Flair wasn't that made the difference—a clean victory over Bret at a major event. Flair never received that one clean victory over Hogan.

C.J. Price: The Public Enemy-Terry Funk feud was the best in years. Their insults about Terry, his daughter, and his "fossil" brother led to some incredible matches, and the best interviews of Terry's career.

James Baker: The Hogan-Flair feud although somewhat "overdue" put the top two stars of the '80s against each other. I think WCW did a better job with the feud than the WWF did back in '90.

Paul Meles: The Douglas vs. Funk vs. Sabu feud made ECW the great promotion that it is today. The combination of great wrestling, incredible brawling, fantastic interviews, and incredible fan heat made this the greatest feud I've ever seen.

Chris Gryscavage: The feud between Bret and Owen has gone on for most of 1994, but for me it never got boring or repetitious. I saw them five times live and all were great matches.

Martin Campbell: Bret Hart vs. Owen Hart was first. Honorable mention has to go to Jerry Lawler vs. Roddy Piper. What they lacked in the ring they compensated with an excellent "War of the Worlds" that will be talked about for years.

Christopher Cressman: Bret vs. Owen for great ringwork and great interviews. McMahon made this sibling rivalry the best feud of the year.

Ted Bauer: The Hogan vs. Flair feud was scripted very well, especially the August Clash drama. Best vs. Owen was also done well, but it became tedious toward the end with the SummerSlam cage match and all. Ramon vs. Michaels had a basic storyline but superb action in every match.

Shane White: Sandman vs. Dreamer was definitely the most interesting through the twists and turns and great storyline.

J.D. Johnson: Tatanka played a great role in making fans believe that Lex Luger had been bought by Ted DiBiase.

David P. Wallace: After watching the Wrestlemania match between Bret and Owen, I would have said this would be best feud. Unfortunately, the WWF ran this feud into the ground and there have been so many Bret vs. Owen matches that I couldn't stand to watch another.

Matt Grady: Owen vs. Bret was the best feud. It had superb matches and some surprising twists and turns. It's amazing how the WWF can turn a jobber into a legitimate title contender. Hogan vs. Flair places second even though the matches weren't great and the angles were lame.

Bruce Mitchell: Los Gringos Locos vs. AAA. Great matches, success at the box office add to a first class feud. 2. Hogan vs. Flair. This was disappointing for both buyrate and storyline, thanks to Hogan's inflated ego, but the matches had tremendous heat. 3. Owen vs. Bret Hart. It had some good matches and fan interest before running out of gas.

Wade Keller: Bret Hart vs. Owen Hart was well booked both in terms of storyline and in-ring action. Cactus vs. The Nastys was the most unhinged. Third goes to Douglas vs. Funk vs. Sabu thanks to great booking and action.

8. MVT OF THE YEAR

The Public Enemy

1. The Public Enemy (20%)

2. The Nasty Boys (19%)

3. Eddy Guerrero & Art Barr (15%)

4. Shawn Michaels & Diesel (15%)

5. The Heavenly Bodies (8%)

6-10) Cactus Jack & Kevin Sullivan, Harlem Heat, Rock & Roll Express, Head Shrinkers, Cactus Jack & Mikey Whipwreck

PAST WINNERS:

1993: Heavenly Bodies, Hollywood Blondes, Steiner Brothers

1992: Steve Williams & Terry Gordy, Rick & Scott Steiner, Arn Anderson & Bobby Eaton

1991: Rick & Scott Steiner, Arn Anderson & Larry Zbyszko, The Rockers.

1990: Rick & Scott Steiner, Midnight Express, Butch Reed & Ron Simmons.

1989: Arn Anderson & Tully Blanchard, The Rockers, Road Warriors.

1988: Midnight Express, Fantastics, Road Warriors

David Layne: No other team is more valuable to their promotion than the Rock & Roll Express. They had good feuds with The Bodies, Lee & Candido, and The Gangstas. They are the undisputed stars of the promotion.

Eric McHugh: The Public Enemy were the one team to dominate their organization and do so in convincing fashion. The Nasty Boys can brawl with the best of them.

Chuck Mullen: The Public Enemy are the coolest cats in any promotion. I can only hope for a Heavenly Bodies vs. The Public Enemy match some day.

Richard Merritt: The Heavenly Bodies have improved a whole lot over the year with top matches in WWF house shows. The Nasty Boys are always great in the ring. The Southern Posse deserve mention as being a top tag team in Florida.

Martin Campbell: There were many decent teams in 1994, but no one who really stood out. Of those, The Smoking Gunns seemed to work the hardest despite having virtually no push. Second goes to The Quebecers who showed a number of innovative moves and could have remained top heels in the WWF had they stayed together. Harlem Heat have improved and moved up in 1994.

Christopher Cressman: The Heavenly Bodies were the only team that was consistent all year. Too bad McMahon didn't give them the push they deserved.

Ted Bauer: The Smoking Gunns are my team of the year because they work well in the ring and are one of the only really good tag teams left. Diesel and Michaels get number two for great heel tactics and a subtle development toward the break-up. Harlem Heat gets number three for their improvements since early 1994 in every way.

Chris Gryscavage: Although they didn't last long as a team, Michaels & Diesel were a great team. When they would enter and leave the ring, their cheers would be as loud or louder than the babyface team they had just defeated.

Matt Grady: The Public Enemy were awesome in ECW. The Nasty Boys get second for their great brawls in the beginning of the year. Heat is third for their improvement.

Paul Meles: The Public Enemy are great wrestlers, ferocious brawlers, and give some of the best interviews I have ever seen.

Barry Johnson: The tag team scene in wrestling this year was, well, pathetic. Granted, a few new teams are starting to come on, like Harlem Heat and The Public Enemy, but I had to

go with the team that actually showed some dominance in the ring, even if only for a month or so—Pretty Wonderful.

Patrick Henry: The toughest to call. The Public Enemy gets first over "Love Machine" Art Barr & Eddy Guerrero because of their unique interview style. Both teams excel in the ring and even though the sentimental choice would be Barr & Guerrero, I still voted for TPE based on their unique style of getting over.

Tobin Shea: Rock & Roll Express was one of the only steady teams to consistently pack the fans into the arenas. The Public Enemy will probably deserve this category next year. Their interviews were great. Harlem Heat has handled their first major push well and continue to improve.

Jeff Gagliardo: Guerrero & Barr hadn't yet reached their peak and were still the best tag team this year. Second goes to Public Enemy for their wild brawls with The Funks and Bad Breed. Third goes to the two nicest guys in the world, Ricky & Robert. Most teeny-bopper types die out in a year, but these guys manage to keep themselves fresh year after year, feud after feud.

Chris Zavisa: The Public Enemy, Guerrero & Barr, and The Gangstas. Public Enemy is one of the best things to watch in ECW. They personify the extreme style to the max and do it wonderfully. Rocco and Grunge are two of the most improved workers on the planet.

Guerrero & Barr were a fantastic team. One great technical worker in Guerrero and one charismatic heel who could work a crowd into a frenzy. Great combination. The Gangstas were the most interesting thing Cornette offered all year despite all the criticism heaped upon them.

Bruce Mitchell: Art Barr & Eddy Guerrero were the best tag team in the world. 2. The Public Enemy. Limited in the ring. Extreme out of it. 3. Shawn Michaels & Diesel had a surprising chemistry together.

Wade Keller: Art Barr & Eddy Guerrero get the nod for match quality and their importance to their promotion. For second place, The Public Enemy and Nasty Boys were both good in the ring this year, but TPE's interviews were so far and above any other tag team in wrestling they get the nod.

9. BEST BRAWLER OF THE YEAR

Cactus Jack

1. Cactus Jack (33%)

2. Sabu (27%)

3. Vader (22%)

4. Terry Funk (11%)

5. The Public Enemy (4%)

6-10) Nasty Boys, Diesel, Dustin Rhodes, Sandman, Bunkhouse Buck

PAST WINNERS:

1993: Cactus Jack, Vader, Terry Funk

1992: Cactus Jack, Eddie Gilbert, The Moondogs

1991: Cactus Jack, Gilbert, Stan Hansen (first year as category).

Christopher Cressman: Cactus Jack and Sabu are first and second for their arena-destroying ECW brawls. Vader slowed from his 1993 matches but destroyed enough jobbers to get third.

Martin Campbell: What more can be said about Vader than has already been said? He is the best big man in the business today. One day I hope we can all savor a Vader vs. Steve Williams or Vader vs. Scott Norton or even a Vader vs. Undertaker series. Second place goes to Cactus who literally put his neck on the line for the business. I pray it doesn't one day kill him. Sabu breaks the myth of only big men being effective and credible brawlers. His versatility and continued exposure could place him as the number one brawler for 1994.

Ted Bauer: Vader wins this for his pain inflicted on jobbers and his rough style on pay-per-view which prevented him from fighting Hogan. Cactus Jack gets number two for his performances at Spring Stampede and Slamboree, and Sullivan gets number three for his part in Slamboree.

Eric McHugh: This was the toughest one to rank. My top three go to Terry Funk, The Public

Enemy, and Cactus Jack. Honorable mention to Sandman, Tommy Dreamer, Bunkhouse Buck, Dustin Rhodes, The Nasty Boys, and Sabu.

Paul Meles: I used to think Sabu was just a high-flying daredevil, but this year he has shown the hardcore fans that he is an accomplished brawler as well. There are only two wrestlers who can really brawl, punch-for-punch, with Sabu. They are Cactus Jack and Terry Funk.

Mark Golden: With his one and a half ears, Cactus Jack is the best brawler and the craziest. Sabu goes without saying and the Funker still has it.

Annette Boyer: Sabu is as reckless a brawler as I've ever seen. Tables, chairs, bottles—he is a sadistic wild child.

Jason Grace: Cactus Jack is able to go anywhere and utilizes anything in a match.

Tobin Shea: Cactus is the king in this category. At least now he wrestles in promotions that aren't afraid to let him do what he does best. Public Enemy excels for the same reasons as Jack. Now that Candido is heading to the WWF he might bring a style never seen before in the WWF, although probably not.

Jason Koch: For the second straight year, Cactus Jack has proven that he's willing to put his body and life on the line for a good match.

Charles Barnette: The Nasty Boys and Cactus Jack get top spots for those tag brawls earlier in '94. Vader gets third for being so brutal.

David Frey: Please, WCW, let Vader have his normal stiff match with Hogan!

Lee Schwartz: I put Cactus Jack and Sabu dead even. Their matches together this past year were legendary. How do you pick anyone but a guy who breaks a rib then busts the other guy over the head seven times with a beer bottle until it finally breaks, all in the same match. Third goes to Terry Funk who just keeps going and going and going.

Chris Clark: Sabu is inching ever closer to brawler Mecca. He deserves a big break, but it would only cramp his style. Cactus Jack continued to give his all (including his ear) for

the sport he loved and the big new 911 began what could be a promising career of run-ins and ringside skirmishes.

James Zordani: Vader is a terrific brawler as well but hasn't been matched against the right opposition in order to merit a number one selection. I remember seeing Leon White in his rookie year when he was known as the Baby Bull. He sure has come a long way. I'm sure he will place higher next year, but then again he might not because he works for WCW.

Will Hartke: Once again, Cactus Jack takes this category hands down. After leaving WCW, he actually got happy with wrestling and it showed. Sabu places in this category automatically because of his wacky moves. Vader gets third because he just plain loves to rough people up. Hogan better check his insurance. He might break a fingernail.

Tim Dills: Sabu is nuts. Cactus Jack had a non-stop year of great matches.

Jeff Cohen: Cactus, Sabu, Terry Funk. Jack is insane, but not as insane as Sabu. Since I will not vote for a complete homicidal maniac, I give Cactus the title this year.

R.C. Price: Cactus gets this for his unforgettable German translation of "please have someone bring my ear in a plastic bag to the hospital."

Chris Zavisa: Terry Funk gets the edge just for his innovation and sense of style. Sabu gets second. Cactus Jack was also awesome. All three were truly awesome, though.

Bruce Mitchell: 1. Cactus Jack was in great brawls in several different settings. 2. Sabu. 3. Terry Funk did some great stuff in two out of the three promotions he worked with.

Wade Keller: This was a good year for brawlers thanks to the Cactus & Sullivan & Maxx Payne vs. Nastys feud in WCW and ECW in general. SMW had some strong brawls also, but not with the original moves of Cactus, Sabu, and Public Enemy. It's a tough choice, but first goes to Sabu, second to Cactus, and third to The Public Enemy. Sabu is just too sensational and mystifying to not get the nod this year.

10. BEST AERIAL WRESTLER

Sabu

1. Sabu (38%)
2. Rey Misterio Jr. (20%)
3. Too Cold Scorpio (18%)
4. 1-2-3 Kid (18%)
5. Chris Benoit (3%)

6-10) Psicosis, Brian Pillman, Jimmy Del Rey, Flyboy Rocco Rock, Cactus Jack

PAST WINNERS:

1993: Too Cold Scorpio, 1-2-3 Kid, Sabu

1992: Jushin Thunder Liger, Brian Pillman, Lightning Kid

1991: Jushin Thunder Liger, Brian Pillman, Lightning Kid (first year as category).

Chris Clark: Sabu gets the nod here. It's rare that a top brawler can also be a top flyer, but Sabu brings a lot to the table if you will. Too Cold Scorpio continued to show he was cold when flying through the air. The 1-2-3 Kid gets third.

Matt Grady: I wish this category was worldwide because the Great Sasuke is the best aerial wrestler in the world. Sabu is first in the U.S. followed by Misterio Jr. and 1-2-3 Kid.

Bob Nichandowicz: Sabu does things that cannot be described by the human mouth.

James Zordani: Sabu is without question number one. Sabu takes risks like no other American wrestler. Who can forget seeing Sabu moonsaulting the ringside railing in the beer bottle match with Cactus Jack?

Ted Bauer: 1-2-3 Kid has been involved in two of the best matches of the year (Action Zone and Raw vs. Bret) and the main reason is his incredible aerial prowess. Alex Wright is number two for his matches so far. I think this kid is going places. Number three goes to Psicosis in Mexico for his Liger-like style in IWC.

Will Hartke: Sabu, 1-2-3 Kid, and Too Cold Scorpio. Sabu and Kid showed what guts they have by doing some of the most bizarre moves successfully. Scorpio made a wise choice by going to ECW where his talents will be appreciated.

David Frey: Most of the good flyers have been grounded (Pillman, Eaton, etc.) Let's give mention to the Vader moonsault. Given the size difference it is much more impressive than Liger's.

Lee Schwartz: Sabu, Scorpio, and 1-2-3 Kid. While Scorpio's moves are almost ballet-like, Sabu's are more risky. He could hold his ranking for years to come if he doesn't kill himself first.

Jeff Cohen: Anybody watching Sabu today who used to be a Jimmy Snuka fan can instantly see how far the business has evolved. And people wonder why Lloyd's of London stopped insuring wrestlers.

R.C. Price: Sabu gets it just for the stuff I've read about. (Although, yes Mr. Zavisa, there are probably 850 guys in Japan who do that stuff all the time, okay, okay!) Chris Benoit and the sadly mishandled 1-2-3 Kid deserve mention as well.

Robert Solari: Sabu's high-flying moves are equaled by some. His crashes, however, have no peer and thus he is first. Art Barr took the "superfly" to another level. Benoit does his ring name "Pegasus" proud.

Martin Campbell: Having the national spotlight has shown that flier 1-2-3 Kid is one of the best all-around wrestlers in North America. Kid should have a series with Owen Hart. Sabu will continue to set the standards throughout the industry.

Paul Meles: Sabu is the greatest high flyer in the history of professional wrestling. When it comes to high-flying maneuvers, Sabu is the most innovative, most impressive aerial artist in the world. Scorpio and Benoit follow.

Cathi Nelson: If Alex Wright can learn how to land his flying moves better, he would be number one in a couple of years. Too bad WCW won't find good competition for Brian Pillman as he's still one of the best.

James Stanius: Rey Misterio Jr. gets first, but Too Cold Scorpio and Sabu are two of the reasons ECW is the best promotion in the world.

Robert O'Connor: I've only seen Rey Misterio Jr. wrestle three times, but that was all it took for him to get my vote. I'd love to see this guy wrestle a 30 minute singles match with someone like Sabu or Sasuke.

Paul Kamrar: Sabu is the human sacrifice. 1-2-3 Kid is second best, although would somebody please feed him a square meal every once in a while. Shawn Michaels gets third for his memorable splash off the ladder at Wrestlemania.

Charles Barnette: Bam Bam Bigelow, Vader, and 1-2-3 Kid. Bigelow and Vader get first and second because of their size at doing moonsaults. 1-2-3 Kid was as always in '94 one of the best aerial wrestlers.

Kevin Kleinrock: Sabu. Plain and simple, he's the future of professional wrestling.

Ted Bauer: 1-2-3 Kid was involved in two of the best matches of the year (Kid vs. Bret on raw, Kid & Ramon vs. Michaels & Diesel on Action Zone) and the main reason is his incredible aerial prowess.

Chris Zavisa: Sabu is not a classic flyer in the sense of aerodynamic beauty like Sayama or Liger. He just throws his body out there and lets it fly. Too Cold Scorpio has some gorgeous moves like his flip off the top and he does it with the lithe beauty of an acrobat. Misterio is more a classic flyer than either of them, but only made a half dozen appearances in the States.

Bruce Mitchell: 1. Rey Misterio Jr. was incredible to watch. 2. Psicosis lives up to the reputation of the guy who he swiped his ring costume from. 3. Too Cold Scorpio was very inventive after he left the WCW straightjacket.

Wade Keller: Rey Misterio Jr. was overall the best flier. Sabu was less graceful and more reckless and is my second choice. Third goes to Scorpio for doing more in mid air during one dive than many wrestlers did all year. Honorable mention to Vader and Bigelow for doing moonsaults at their weight.

11. BEST MAJOR TELEVISION EVENT

Wrestlemania X

1. Wrestlemania X (33%)

2. AAA's When Worlds Collide (30%)

3. Spring Stampede (22%)

4. Royal Rumble (5%)

5. Beach Bash (5%)

6-10) Survivor Series, SummerSlam, Halloween Havoc, Slamboree, King of the Ring

PAST WINNERS:

1993: SuperBrawl, King of the Ring, SummerSlam

1992: Royal Rumble, Wrestlemania VIII, SuperBrawl II

1991: WCW WrestleWar '91, WCW SuperBrawl I, WCW Japan Supershow.

1990: WCW Great American Bash, WWF Wrestlemania VI, Starrcade '90.

1989: NWA Great American Bash, NWA WrestleWar '89, NWA Chi-Town Rumble.

Christopher Cressman: This was another year of mostly lousy pay-per-views. Wrestlemania wins thanks to the Ramon-Michaels ladder match. Survivor Series shows booking at its best. Halloween Havoc gets third for the final (?) match of Ric Flair.

Geoff Kleinert: I give Wrestlemania the nod because it had the match of the year in my opinion (Ramon vs. Michaels) and another match of the year candidate (Hart vs. Hart), and a three star main event. On balance the AAA pay-per-view was better, but I still lean toward Wrestlemania.

Ted Bauer: Wrestlemania X featured the two best matches of the year, so it's an easy number one. Spring Stampede was the surprise event, because aside from some screwjob endings, everybody worked hard. It would have been better had Hogan showed. Slamboree gets number three almost solely for the tag team brawl.

Eric McHugh: Wrestlemania X was an exciting event with, more than anything, an atmosphere of importance. The Clash of the Champions in August with Hogan vs. Flair was an absolute drama. Spring Stampede was a great event with an old NWA feel to it.

Mark Golden: Just ask anyone who saw it, When Worlds Collide was the pay-per-view of the year.

Jenny Kaiser: Wrestlemania was a milestone in history and will probably be remembered forever, especially for its two classic matches.

Jason Koch: Bash at the Beach was entertaining because of the shock value of seeing Hulk Hogan wrestle again. Wrestlemania is always full of excitement and unexpected storylines. Halloween Havoc proved to be a no holds barred event, especially with the Nasty Boys match.

Charles Barnette: Wrestlemania X had Ramon vs. Michaels and Bret vs. Owen. Series was overall quite good and even SummerSlam was better than anything WCW had in '94.

Kevin Kleinrock: The WWF rules the supercards this year with Wrestlemania, Rumble, and Series. Wrestlemania had two classic bouts, the Rumble had the classic Rumble and a great Intercontinental Title match and Series had the awesome opening bout with the great Diesel turn.

Tim Dills: AAA's When World's Collide provided more action and intensity than all other pay-per-views, WCW's and WWF's combined.

Doug Gruener: When Worlds Collide totally blew me away. I was in awe of those men's talents.

Chris Clark: King of the Ring continued to provide lots of wrestling and little embarrassment, while AAA's When Worlds Collide finally gave all of North America a taste of the explosive lucha libre.

Matt Grady: The pay-per-views in 1994 were better than in 1993. First goes to Wrestlemania X with the two best matches in the federation's history. AAA's When Worlds Collide gets

second. It would have been first, but it was too short. Spring Stampede places third. The card was good from top to bottom.

Will Hartke: Wrestlemania X wasn't the most exciting, but it had a great Bret Hart vs. Yokozuna match and a five star Razor Ramon vs. Shawn Michaels match. Starrcade was great because Hulk Hogan finally got put in his place by Vader. Havoc was great because you got to see Ric Flair doing his best at putting over a no talent, no charisma, no hair old fogey like Hulk Hogan. It's sad to see a great career come to an end this way.

David Frey: No debate here. Wrestlemania X had the two best matches of the year.

Jeff Cohen: AAA made a splash in their debut. Now let's see if they can continue their momentum without Art Barr.

R.C. Price: On the strength of its best matches, Wrestlemania gets it this year and is the first Wrestlemania in a long time that deserves such an accolade.

Chris Zavisa: The best pay-per-view of the year came courtesy of AAA in Los Angeles despite the worst efforts of WCW brass to destroy it. Bischoff and company should take a hint from Bob Dylan who said "get out of the new road if you can't understand for the times they are a changing."

Bruce Mitchell: 1. When Worlds Collide. Even the sabotage of some jealous incompetents at WCW could not stop this show from being a prototype for the future. Tremendous heat and an announcing crew that lent credibility to the show instead of corny "jokes." 2. Wrestlemania X had two great matches and was an entertaining mix of Titan sports at its best.

Wade Keller: Wrestlemania X was the best overall show of the year thanks mostly to the strength of the top two matches. When Worlds Collide was so strong, but ended too quickly with a good, but not great cage match. It had refreshingly credible announcing, but lacked the glitz of the other pay-per-views (no thanks to WCW). Because it was the first of its kind, it will be the most memorable of the year. Spring Stampede was WCW's best event of the year.

12. MANAGER OF THE YEAR

Paul E. Dangerously

1. Paul E. Dangerously (26%)

2. Jim Cornette (24%)

3. Ted DiBiase (10%)

4. Sensational Sherri (10%)

5. Tammy Fytch (9%)

6-10) Woman, Col. Robert Parker, Jimmy Hart, Paul Bearer, Jason

PAST WINNERS:

1993: Jim Cornette, Tammy Fytch, Paul E. Dangerously

1992: Paul E. Dangerously, Jim Cornette, Ron Wright

1991: Paul E. Dangerously, Sensational Sherri, Paul Bearer.

1990: Jim Cornette, Bobby Heenan, Sensational Sherri.

1989: Jim Cornette, Bobby Heenan, Paul E. Dangerously.

1988: Jim Cornette, Paul E. Dangerously, Bobby Heenan.

J.D. Johnson: Sherri allows herself to get beat like a man. She beat up Hogan worse than Flair when they had the cage match. Sherri is tough.

Christopher Cressman: Vince McMahon had the greatest manager in the sport, Jim Cornette, in his hands and didn't know what to do with him. Talk about a waste.

Ted Bauer: Sherri gets manager of the year because she added a great deal to the Hogan vs. Flair feud and wasn't a fifth wheel like Jimmy Hart. Tammy Fytch draws excellent crowd heat because of her bitchy attitude and will make waves in the WWF. Paul E. Dangerously does a great job of establishing his wrestlers.

Richard Merritt: Paul E. Dangerously is the best manager with great interviews and manages the best wrestler, Sabu. Jim Cornette comes in

second. I can't wait until he turns babyface. Col. Parker is the best WCW has had since Paul E. Dangerously.

Mike Omansky: Jimmy Hart scores on longevity and in not letting his character get in the way of others. Second to Paul E. Dangerously who continues to do great interviews and has a real presence.

Robert O'Connor: Paul E. Dangerously gets first. With the exception of Jim Cornette, there's no one else that I can think of who can give an intense heel manager interview like Dangerously.

Gary Turek: Sherri managed in ECW and AAA. She took more bumps and wrestlers' finishing moves than any other manager in 1994. She worked hard at ringside when she was supposed to, but just as importantly went into the background when necessary, also.

Chris Clark: Paul E. Dangerously did in 1994 for ECW what Jim Cornette did in 1993 for SMW, and deserves a heap of credit. Ted DiBiase turned as a manager and his gift for gab was a welcome addition to the WWF. I'll give Harley Race the number three spot because he continues to entertain and take killer bumps.

Matt Grady: Paul E. Dangerously is great at getting his wrestlers over and can take a good bump. Cornette has kept SMW alive in '94. Sherri was great as Douglas's and Flair's manager this year.

Bob Nichandowicz: Managers seem to play less of a role these days than they used to. The top three (Cornette, Fytch, and Dangerously) are interchangeable. Dangerously would be number one if he were featured more at ringside during the TV show.

Robert Solari: A bad year for most managers. Paul E. Dangerously edges out Jim Cornette because he seemed to stay more focused throughout the year and he handled his monster (911) better than Cornette handled his (Bruiser Bedlam). Cornette is still the king of putdowns.

Will Hartke: Jim Cornette, Paul E. Dangerously, Tammy Fytch. Cornette made people hate him so much that by the time he turned babyface, they loved him. Heyman did

such great work with Sabu and 911 that once ECW goes national, it will be as big as WCW and the WWF. Fytch is a bitch, plain and simple.

Tim Dills: Cornette needs out of the WWF but he had a very solid year in SMW. His late year turn to manage The Rock & Roll Express was beautiful. The sight of Woman pulling a drag off a cigarette was quite satisfying. With Paul Heyman's direction, Woman helped turn Sandman into a fascinating wrestler. Scott Bowden had a good late year. He had a lot of funny lines directed toward Eddie Marlin and crew. I believe he has a lot of potential.

Chris Zavisa: Paul E. Dangerously has found his niche and does it to perfection. His ringside work is actually fairly limited but he more than makes up for it with maniacal mic work that is repeatedly the highlight of their TV programming. Cornette is the best ringside manager in the history of the sport despite relying on the same three or four interests ad nauseam throughout the year. Tammy Fytch was something new and played the role well.

Bruce Mitchell: 1. Jim Cornette, based on his SMW work, is still the best—on the air—but he repeated and overexposed himself too much this year to be as strong as he was in past years. 2. Paul E. Dangerously was more a cheerleader for ECW than a traditional manager, but his rants were very entertaining. 3. Darryl Van Horne. Anyone who can get away with saying "felching" on broadcast TV deserves something. I'm not sure what.

Wade Keller: This was far from the year of the manager. Even the "best two"—Paul E. Dangerously and Jim Cornette—had major weakness. Cornette went through the motions a lot, but his highpoints were better than anyone, especially his interview after the Heavenly Bodies lost the loser leaves town match to The Rock & Roll Express (which was the best interview of the year). His WWF work and some SMW work was uninspired. Dangerously was too much a cheerleader for ECW and not enough of a defined character himself. Sensational Sherri gets the nod for first place in that she got over her wrestlers, not herself, and drew heat. Second goes to Woman for her vast improvement behind the mic and playing her seductive role so well. Third goes to Scott Bowden for his raw energy and absence of a goofy gimmick.

13. BEST BROADCASTER

Bobby Heenan

1. Bobby Heenan (20%)

2. Jim Ross (18%)

3. Vince McMahon (17%)

4. Joey Styles (17%)

5. Jerry Lawler (10%)

6-10) Tony Schiavone, Randy Savage, Shawn Michaels, Gordon Solie, Lance Russell

PAST WINNERS:

1993: Bobby Heenan, Jim Ross, Vince McMahon

1992: Jim Ross, Bobby Heenan, Tony Schiavone

(Before 1992, announcers and color commentators were separate categories.)

Announcer of the Year:

1991: Ross, Schiavone, McMahon.

1990: Ross, Schiavone, McMahon.

1989: Ross, Schiavone, Lance Russell.

1988: Ross, Ventura, Russell.

Color Commentator of the Year:

1991: Heenan, Paul E. Dangerously, Scotty "The Body" Anthony.

1990: Ventura, Paul E. Dangerously, Roddy Piper.

1989: Ventura, Jim Cornette, Michael Hayes.

J.D. Johnson: Vince McMahon adds color to Monday Night Raw when he talks about real world events.

Christopher Cressman: Jerry Lawler was the funniest man behind the mic all year. His insults of the faces are the best. McMahon is his perfect foil.

Martin Campbell: Tony Schiavone was the best followed by Jim Ross, who was the best of the last ten years. Bobby Heenan is third because

without him, much of WCW would have been unwatchable this year.

Scott White: Gordon Solie is still the greatest and should be used more.

Ted Bauer: Bobby Heenan wins for his great one-liners and his addition of punch to WCW broadcasts. Gene Okerlund is very good on interviews, so he gets number two. McMahon gets three because he varies as a straight man depending on whom he gets to play off of.

Chuck Mullen: Nobody is better than Joey Styles. No one. He clearly enjoys his job.

Eric McHugh: Jim Ross bleeds credibility with every word. Joey Styles is perfect for ECW. Jesse Ventura is the best color man in wrestling.

Paul Meles: Joey Styles is the run-away winner. Styles, with his unlimited wrestling knowledge and quick wit, is the most exciting and interesting play-by-play man in wrestling. He is one of many reasons the ECW TV show is the hottest wrestling show today. Jim Ross and Tony Schiavone follow.

Cathi Nelson: As long as Bobby Heenan is in wrestling he should win this award.

Sheldon Goldberg: Tie for Chris Cruise and Mike Tenay. They can't be separate since their best work is for one and the same event and it made more new lucha fans in one night than a year's worth of AAA tapes from Galavision. Like Cruise & Tenay, Jeff Blatnick brought home in one broadcast (November UWFI Shootwrestling III) that credible announcing makes fans.

Mark Golden: No one in wrestling can come close to calling a match as well as Jim Ross. He will be the next Gordon Solie. Bobby Heenan and Jerry Lawler are basically comedians, but keep me laughing.

Marshall Goldberg: Art Donovan was so horrible that he was hysterical. When he babbled as Macho Man and Gorilla ignored him, it was priceless. I really miss Jesse Ventura. I am so sick of Heenan. His lines are tired and unlike Jesse and other "heel" sidekicks, there isn't even a hint or facade of objectivity.

Dave Frey: Heenan keeps getting better with age. The best compliment you can give Shawn Michaels is that he is the next Bobby Heenan.

Lee Schwartz: Joey Styles's manic delivery makes even a squash match seem exciting. Bobby Heenan is still the master of the "blank look," always funny and always confused.

Jeff Cohen: Bobby Heenan played his role perfectly. But it remains to be seen if he can reinvent himself after five years of the same schtick. It's about time we see if he can evolve to another level, or if he's going to be left in the dust in a stale role. Same with Schiavone. Joey Styles is the next wave, and he's gaining fast.

R.C. Price: Even with half his face gone, Jim Ross still lent a more credible presence to the sport than anyone else ringside. Jim Cornette full-time on Raw would have been the only real replacement for Bobby Heenan. Maybe if SMW folds, it still might happen.

Chris Zavisa: Joey Styles is the perfect announcer for ECW. When he departed for those few weeks, the shows were just not the same. The man is living proof of the axiom—"For every pot there is a lid." He and ECW are the perfect fit. Jim Ross is still the most professional announcer in wrestling and it was great to see him find a home with Cornette and SMW. People dump on him far too many sports-related metaphors, but when you look at the alternatives, he is a welcome addition. Schiavone is doing a credible job in a hopeless situation that totally lacks credibility. And that is no small accomplishment.

Bruce Mitchell: 1. Jeff Blatnick lent knowledge and legitimacy to both UWFI and the UWF. The best of the future. 2. Jim Ross didn't have as much to call, but his competition was pathetic this year. 3. Mike Tenay may have been the best prepared announced for a one night shot in any sport's history.

Wade Keller: Joey Styles is a cross between Jim Ross and Vince McMahon, except he goes solo, calls a more intriguing product, and is a smart ass. McMahon is a close second and Ross is a close third. Color commentators were weaker this year. Heenan was the best, but he was too streaky to finish in the top three.

14. BEST BOOKER

Paul Heyman

**1. Paul Heyman
(37%)**

**2. Vince McMahon
(34%)**

**3. Antonio Pena
(11%)**

4. Jim Cornette (9%)

5. Ric Flair (5%)

6-10) Jerry Lawler/Jeff Jarrett, Dusty Rhodes (no other vote getters)

PAST WINNERS:

(formerly "Promoter of the Year")

1993: Jim Cornette, Vince McMahon, Paul Heyman

1992: Jim Cornette, Vince McMahon, Kip Frey

Christopher Cressman: Paul Heyman runs away with this award. Who would have thought angles involving bloody brawls would draw money nowadays? I wish Bischoff and McMahon would bring some of that back.

Martin Campbell: ECW is truly a promotion that goes to the edge and leaps over it. Heyman has a brilliant mind for the business. In second place is Vince. Despite his past and present, Vince should be commended for acquiring and holding some of the finest matches in North America. Just three years ago who would have thought 1-2-3 Kid, Jeff Jarrett and Bob Holly would enter the WWF and Owen Hart would be given a chance to shine in main events? Cornette has continued to produce a strong, though controversial at times, SMW program. If he could only break away from blatant stereotypes and try more unique and fresh ideas he could easily become the top booker in the country.

Andy Johnson: Paul Heyman is the only choice for booker of the year unless you've never seen ECW. If you have seen ECW then you know what I'm talking about. All of his angles were carefully thought out and well-executed by the great wrestlers of ECW. Some of the angles in

ECW included the Funk-Douglas hotel fight. The Douglas trashing of the NWA belt, Mikey Whipwreck turning into a main eventer, and much much more, so 1994 was the year of ECW.

Chuck Mullen: What a year for AA/IWC. Pena must now deliver the goods or bow out.

Eric McHugh: Paul Heyman and ECW are number one for making me an excited wrestling fan again.

Michael Andrusis: Vince McMahon had an incredible year in that he was faced with the matches of his life—his court case and continued to book incredible events and matches as well.

Paul Meles: Paul Heyman's continuously fresh, exciting, and innovative ideas have made ECW the hottest wrestling ever. Besides the character development, Paul has put together the best feuds of any wrestling promotion.

Mike Omansky: Even though I think he rushed Diesel at the end of 1994 and should have held off while taking advantage of the Backlund heat, Vince McMahon is number one. McMahon really has a handle on his business and is superb at character development yet willing to terminate a mistake. While the WWF may have a weak roster, McMahon does a better job than WCW or anyone else in making the most out of what he's got. WCW had Oz, Mean, Mark, Captain Mike, and Diamond Studd—all without proper character development and booking—while the WWF has Diesel, Undertaker, I.R.S., and Razor Ramon. Jeff Jarrett and Shawn Michaels were brought along well in and out of exciting feuds. Moreover, plots are very understandable for house show match-ups and pay-per-views.

Sheldon Goldberg: Paul Heyman is number one because he gave us the freshest, most creative TV and quality live shows in the U.S. Lawler and Jarrett get the number two spot because they do the most with the least and stay in business.

Gary Miller: Paul Heyman did an unbelievable job as booker for Extreme Championship Wrestling. The TV shows were incredible as well as all the house shows. He has the ability to create great angles and characters who are believable. Heyman as booker led ECW to become the best promotion in 1994.

Robert O'Connor: Great new category. Paul Heyman turned a sleepy little Philly group into today's hottest promotion. Nurturing young stars, like Shane Douglas, Sabu, and 911, while mixing in some established tough guys like Terry Funk and Cactus Jack, has made ECW fresh, new, and ready for big time. Wrestling has been waiting for this chance for a long time. (So Hogan, please retire!)

Ted Bauer: McMahon is best booker for his ability to take mid-card wrestlers such as Backlund, Owen, and Diesel and turn them into main event stars. Heyman is second for creating the most innovative promotion in wrestling. Cornette is third for the Gangstas gimmick.

Chris Zavisa: Paul Heyman is giving hardcore fans everything they could possibly want and then doubles it. If you could buy stock in ECW and Heyman was signed to a long term contract to book it, I would buy in. There is no other wrestling promotion in this country I would dare put even a sawbuck into.

Antonio Pena is a great booker because he long ago learned the first lesson of life. Remember the old readers from first grade? The first word in it was "see." Pena watches everything, listens to anyone with a brain, and learns. That by itself separates him from 90 percent of the other people in wrestling. After all, they already know everything so why should they attempt to learn anything more.

Bruce Mitchell: 1. Antonio Pena's twist and turn booking of matches told stories with more chapters than any one else. 2. Paul Heyman's "us against them" angles created a cult of "New Marks" who actually think they want to see a shoot match between Shane Douglas and Ric Flair. 3. Jim Cornette knows something better than anyone else in the world, but what he knows is passé.

Wade Keller: Last year's winner Jim Cornette seemed so frustrated by lack of resources that he resorted to tactics and angles he would have scoffed at years ago. Even so, he paced his storylines better than anyone else from week to week. He gets third. McMahon gets second place. His highs were high, but his lows were silly and juvenile. He didn't miss a beat despite legal distractions. First place goes to Heyman who saw his limited resources as an opportunity to explore new territory as a booker. It worked.

SECONDARY CATEGORIES 15-43

15: Best Workrate

- 1) Sabu
- 2) Shawn Michaels
- 3) Bret Hart
- 4) Ric Flair
- 5) Cactus Jack

16: Independent MVP

- 1) Sabu
- 2) Al Snow
- 3) Cactus Jack
- 4) Shane Douglas
- 5) Terry Funk

17: Best Rookie

- 1) Jean Paul LeVesque
- 2) Mikey Whipwreck
- 3) Alex Wright
- 4) 911
- 5) Duke Droese

18: Best Promotion

- 1) ECW
- 2) WWF
- 3) AAA/IWC
- 4) WCW
- 5) SMW

19: Non-TV Promotion

- 1) NWA New Jersey
- 2) NWA Michigan
- 3) Midwest Territorial

20: Promoter of Year

- 1) Vince McMahon
- 2) Tod Gordon
- 3) Paul Heyman
- 4) Antonio Pena
- 5) Jim Cornette

21: Best Angle

- 1) Sandman fakes being blinded
- 2) Backlund goes psycho
- 3) Owen tricks parents at Series
- 4) Owen turns heel on brother Bret
- 5) Tatanka-Luger-DiBiase triangle

22: Rising Star

- 1) Diesel
- 2) Sabu
- 3) Jean Paul LeVesque
- 4) Shane Douglas
- 5) 1-2-3 Kid

23: Career Tailspin

- 1) Ric Flair

- 2) Lex Luger
- 3) Undertaker
- 4) Brian Pillman
- 5) Guardian Angel (Big Bubba)

24: Best TV Show

- 1) WWF Monday Night Raw
- 2) ECW Syndicated
- 3) WCW Saturday Night
- 4) SMW Syndicated
- 5) AAA on Galavision

25: Most Embarrassing

- 1) Dave Sullivan
- 2) Doink
- 3) Hulk Hogan
- 4) Bastion Booger
- 5) Hacksaw Duggan

26: Worst Wrestler

- 1) Dave Sullivan
- 2) Hulk Hogan
- 3) Hacksaw Duggan
- 4) Honky Tonk Man
- 5) The Butcher (Ed Leslie)

27: Announcing Team

- 1) Schiavone & Heenan
- 2) McMahon & Lawler
- 3) Cruise & Tenay
- 4) McMahon & Michaels
- 5) McMahon & Savage

28: Best on Interviews

- 1) Ric Flair
- 2) Shane Douglas
- 3) Cactus Jack
- 4) Shawn Michaels
- 5) Bob Backlund

29: Most Underutilized

- 1) Brian Pillman
- 2) Steve Austin
- 2) 1-2-3 Kid
- 4) Terry Taylor
- 5) Sting

30: Most Overpushed

- 1) Hulk Hogan
- 2) Hacksaw Duggan
- 3) Lex Luger
- 4) The Butcher (Ed Leslie)
- 5) Dave Sullivan

31: Most Insulting Stereotype

- 1) The Gangstas

- 2) Men on a Mission
- 3) Dave Sullivan
- 4) Tatanka
- 5) Yokozuna

32: Best Maneuver

- 1) Sabu moonsault table break
- 2) Vader moonsault
- 3) Vader inverted powerbomb
- 4) Sabu's Arabian facebuster
- 5) Art Barr's frog splash

33: Worst Maneuver

- 1) Hogan legdrop
- 2) Butcher sleeper
- 3) Honky Tonk Man shake rattle roll
- 4) Doink's whoopie cushion
- 5) Duggan shoulder tackle

34: Worst Match

- 1) Midget Mixed Tag (Series)
- 2) Undertaker-Undertaker (Slam)
- 3) Flair-Hogan (Havoc)
- 4) Jim Steele-Equalizer (SBrawl)
- 5) Sullivan-Mr. T (Starrcade)

35: Worst Personality

- 1) Hulk Hogan
- 2) Dave Sullivan
- 3) Eric Bischoff
- 4) Harvey Wippleman
- 5) Jim Duggan

36: Worst Interviews

- 1) Dave Sullivan
- 2) Hulk Hogan
- 3) Bob Backlund
- 4) Alex Wright
- 5) Butcher

37: Favorite Wrestler

- 1) Ric Flair
- 2) Sabu
- 3) Shawn Michaels
- 4) Vader
- 5) Bret Hart

38: Least Favorite

- 1) Hulk Hogan
- 2) Doink
- 3) Dave Sullivan
- 4) Hacksaw Duggan
- 5) Butcher

39: Japan Tag Team

- 1) Misawa & Kobashi
- 2) Hell Raisers

- 3) Rick & Scott Steiner
- 4) Furnas & Kroffat
- 5) Hase & Muto

40: Best Japan Feud

- 1) Williams-Kobashi
- 2) Williams-Kawada
- 3) Onita-Pogo
- 4) Misawa et al-Kawada et al
- 5) Hasimoto-Sasaki

41: Best Japan Match

- 1) Aja Kong-M. Toyota (11/20)
- 2) Benoit-Sasuke (4/16)
- 3) Liger-Sasuke (4/16)
- 4) Misawa-Kawada (6/3)
- 5) Williams-Kobashi (9/3)

42: Japan Promotion

- 1) New Japan
- 2) All Japan Women
- 3) All Japan
- 4) Frontier Martial Arts
- 5) UFWI

43: Mexican Feud

- 1) Konnan-Perro Aguayo
- 2) Gingos Locos-AAA
- 3) Konnan-Jake Roberts
- 4) Estrada-Misterio
- 5) Barr/Guerrero-Santo/Panther

Notebook

Sabu won Independent MVP by a two to one margin over Al Snow and Cactus Jack... For just doing chokeslams all year, 911 received a remarkable number of votes for best rookie... ECW beat out the WWF for promotion of the year by more than a two to one margin... Diesel received three times the votes for Rising Star as anyone else... Raw beat out ECW for best TV show by a two to one margin but ECW beat out the rest of the picks by a similarly large margin... Despite his low profile in '94, Terry Taylor remained in voters' minds as Most Underutilized... Hulk Hogan was voted Most Overpushed by a three to one margin over Duggan... The Gangstas received 90 percent of all votes for "Most Insulting Stereotype"... Hogan's legdrop was the runaway vote getter for Worst Maneuver... Hulk Hogan received over 80 percent of all votes for Least Favorite Wrestler...

WRESTLING'S MOST INFLUENTIAL LIST OF 1994

The third annual "Wrestling's Most Influential List" has taken on a few changes compared to last year, besides the slight change in name. Instead of basing the list of wrestling's most powerful as of Dec. 31 of a given year, it is a list of wrestling's most influential people throughout the year. The only thing that changes is that someone who had power throughout the first eleven months of the year and then lost power by Dec. 31 would remain higher on this year's list than had the rules not changed. Another change is that reporters (such as last year's no. 8 Dave Meltzer) and columnists (such as the *New York Post's* Phil Mushnick or the *Torch's* Bruce Mitchell) who have influence through covering wrestling aren't eligible.

Otherwise, the basis for the following list remains the same. Like the "Top 100 Worldwide Ratings," this list was compiled with input from over two dozen journalists, wrestlers, and promoters who closely follow the ebb and flow of the power structure of wrestling in the United States. As in past years, a somewhat arbitrary decision was made to restrict this list to those who have had influence on the U.S. wrestling scene, as opposed to a worldwide perspective, if for no other reason than the difficulty in comparing the most powerful promoter in Japan or Mexico to the equivalent person in the U.S.

In past years' mini-bios and analysis of each person's standing was listed for the top 10 finishers. This year, there is analysis on positions 1 through 15, also (although less depth is given in analyzing positions 11-15).

Influence is gaged mainly on two elements: (1) how much power one wielded throughout the year in generating revenue for themselves or employees in wrestling; and (2) how much one's actions or lack of actions changed the course of the industry. More stress is given to those who change the industry for the long term versus someone who is part of a fad or has a short string of influence that shows no sign of leaving a permanent mark on the industry.

An added feature this year is a forecast of whether each person listed will see their influence rise or fall during 1995. Following the main list, there is also a list of those who dropped off the list this year compared to last year.

1

TERRY BOLLEA
World Championship Wrestling

FACTS Position: Franchise wrestler... Years in Position: 1... Age: 42... Previous Ratings ('93, '92): 11, 5...

ANALYSIS Terry Bollea ("Hulk Hogan") was hired by one of the "big two" for the largest guaranteed contract ever offered to a pro wrestler. His contract also afforded him as much power as any wrestler (who didn't hold ownership in the company he worked for) has ever had.

It was not a unanimous choice for Bollea to be rated no. 1. Many believed Vince McMahon still deserved the position. In the end, Bollea edged McMahon for the top slot because his name more than the WWF name is what people identify most with pro wrestling. Hogan's actions in the industry do more to shape how it is perceived by the mainstream press and general public than anything Vince McMahon can do.

Hogan beat out his boss, Eric Bischoff, because his boss signed over so much power to him that Hogan had the freedom to do what he wanted, even if his superiors felt it could hurt the overall health of WCW.

His influence was tremendous not just among mainstream America, but within the industry itself. By virtue of his presence he afforded WCW the excuse or opportunity, depending on your view, to avoid major changes that would have been necessary without him. He also had tremendous influence over who, besides himself, was hired and pushed in WCW in 1994. His presence in WCW put the WWF on the defense and forced a "new generation" campaign that changed the direction the WWF chose to go in.

Hogan's testimony in the McMahon trial may have been a major factor in the not guilty verdict.

MITIGATING FACTOR Hogan's influence on ratings, attendance, and buyrates was minimal, at best, as WCW did not undergo a resurgence.

FORECAST Steady... He will remain in WCW in 1994 and continue to have unprecedented influence with or without profitable results.

2

VINCE MCMAHON
World Wrestling Federation

FACTS Position: President/Owner of Titan Sports... Years in Position: 11... Age: 49... Previous Ratings: 1, 1...

ANALYSIS Vince McMahon had the potential to drop off of this list had he been convicted and sentenced to time in prison at his steroid trial last summer. He was at risk of going out of business due to a combination of legal fees, lawsuit losses, and drops in revenue. But, mainly because of a good insurance policy to absorb the Chuck Austin decision, he and his company stayed afloat in 1994 as wrestling's number one company. It was number one in TV ratings, pay-per-view buyrates (on average, although WCW ran more pay-per-views which one could argue diluted the product), house show attendance in the aggregate, and to a lesser degree mainstream perception.

The WWF is the most organized, most well-established company in the U.S. by a longshot. Vince McMahon still wields the power to, on a whim, change the entire direction of the industry. As the owner of Titan Sports, he answers to no one—just profit motive. He also was behind the developing a skeleton crew of lesser known wrestlers into a crew that is probably more desirable for the long-run than any other roster in the U.S.

The WWF still is responsible for at least half of the exposure wrestling gets on television airwaves in the U.S., employs more wrestlers for a higher median income than any other U.S. company, and runs more matches per year in the U.S. than any other promoter.

MITIGATING FACTOR Because of the negative exposure he and his company received before, during, and immediately after the steroid trial, McMahon's ability to make wrestling perceived as truly mainstream diminished greatly.

FORECAST Steady... McMahon's ability to recover from whatever damage was done to the WWF in 1994 will be a big story in 1995. Either way, he will remain one of the top two positions.

3**ERIC BISCHOFF**
World Championship Wrestling**FACTS** Position: Vice president.... Years in Position: 2... Age: 39... Previous Ratings: 2, —...**ANALYSIS** Throughout the year, Bischoff gained more power in his official title and job description, but relinquished much of his ability to chart the course of WCW to Hulk Hogan. Nonetheless, Bischoff's influence in the wrestling industry was tremendous during the year. He was a global traveler, setting up European tours, signing a working relationship with New Japan Pro Wrestling (making an obscene amount of money for WCW in the process), and forming a partnership on pay-per-view with AAA/IWC—all in 1994. But his most notable achievement was signing the biggest star of wrestling in this era, Hulk Hogan, to a multi-million dollar contract that changed the direction and perception of WCW. His influence in the industry grew in 1994, although he drops from 2 to 3 only because of the resurgence of Bollea.**MITIGATING FACTOR** By giving Hogan so much power, Bischoff lost influence in WCW in terms of main events and the world title situation.**FORECAST** Steady... He is doing enough right within the corporate environment, with or without profit, to remain in this position, barring a disaster involving Hogan or more 900 line p.r. disasters.**6****PAT PATTERSON**
World Wrestling Federation**FACTS** Position: Vice president of wrestling operations... Years in Position: 7... Age: 54... Previous Ratings: 3, 3...**ANALYSIS** Patterson didn't do much different this year than the last two years when he was rated no. 3. He rated lower only because Hogan and Heyman broke into the top five through increasing influence and Flair, in a parallel position to Patterson except in WCW, played a role in the ring, not just behind the scenes. Patterson was McMahon's closest confidant throughout the year and was considered by wrestlers the no. 2 power in the company in terms of booking matters.

He showed a magic touch in turning Backlund from expendable to an entertaining top heel. His input on the Owen Hart-Bret Hart scenarios set the standard for booking schemes in the U.S...

MITIGATING FACTORS Vince McMahon is such a dominant, hands-on power in the WWF, Patterson's ability to make major shifts in direction on his own is limited. The Backlund and Diesel title switches which he had input on didn't work at the box office...**FORECAST** Decrease... With rumors of Patterson taking a leave of absence sometime in '95 to his Florida home and with the growing influence of Jim Ross, Patterson will likely drop.**4****RIC FLAIR**
World Championship Wrestling**FACTS** Position: Booker... Years in Position: 1... Age: 46... Previous Ratings: 6, 4...**ANALYSIS** In terms of influence, he was not only WCW's main event wrestler from January through October, but he was head booker throughout the entire year. Although he was a delegator of booking responsibilities, he was the man responsible for the content of the television shows, match-making, and talent hirings, with input from his boss Bischoff of course.

His greatest influence during 1994 was voluntarily following Hogan's preferred booking scheme. By agreeing to retire after his Halloween Havoc match, Flair let Hogan stand on his own. Flair, one of the five or ten most recognizable wrestlers in the country today, arguably gave Hogan a tremendous amount of credibility by losing to him cleanly.

MITIGATING FACTORS Flair is regarded by many as a pushover for whatever Hogan wants. A lot of the hiring WCW did was against Flair's better judgement, but he was willing to give in to Hogan's wishes out of awe for Hogan's mainstream celebrity status. He is also less influential in that he delegates many duties...**FORECAST** Decrease... Flair's history shows he will continue to defer to Hogan's wishes, thus rendering him a figure-head for big decisions...**7****JIMMY HART**
World Championship Wrestling**FACTS** Position: Terry Bollea's personal manager... Years in Position: 1... Age: ... Previous Positions: —, —...**ANALYSIS** Just as Pat Patterson earned a high position for being the closest confidant to Vince McMahon, Jimmy Hart earned a high position through his relationship with Terry Bollea. Hart was a legitimate behind the scenes hands on manager for Bollea, taking part in Bollea's amazing contract signing and pushing forth Bollea's behind the scenes and on-camera agenda. Hart also talked Bollea out of a lot of ideas and kept, to some degree, Hogan's ego in check, although many would say he did much more to fuel it. He was behind "Team Hogan" being hired and preventing any threats of Hulk Hogan's status being downplayed...**MITIGATING FACTOR** He had no on-air impact, which others on this list such as Bollea, McMahon, Flair, Heyman, Cornette, and even Bischoff had. With no official position his influence comes from persuasion and through Hogan rather than through official decision-makings...**FORECAST** Steady... Hart will continue to be Bollea's spokesman on and off camera. If Bollea needs a scapegoat, Hart is close enough to Bollea that he won't be the person Bollea chooses...**5****PAUL HEYMAN**
Extreme Champ. Wrestling**FACTS** Position: Partner/Booker... Years in Position: 11... Age: 29... Previous Ratings: 10, —...**ANALYSIS** Some of those in the straw poll rated Heyman as high as four, others as low as ten. Heyman, though, is running what is regarded worldwide as the most innovative, progressive promotion anywhere. His character development broke new ground in '94, his television format inspired imitations in wrestling and elsewhere, and the in-ring style he and partner Tod Gordon promoted attracted a hardcore set of fans. As he gained momentum in '94 with a smoother, more refined but still changing product, others had no choice but to take notice at what was working.**MITIGATING FACTORS** The fact remains that ECW ran fewer house shows than the other four "full time" U.S. promotions and less in total than Ron Skoler did in L.A. all year. ECW TV is still seen in limited markets, although with the New York and Philadelphia timeslots, it gives it major market anchors. ECW remains a small time promotion and until it reaches more than 50 percent of U.S. TV sets or promotes in bigger arenas or on pay-per-view, it will be a cult promotion with influence beyond its sphere...**FORECAST** Increase... ECW has shown growth. Could be a major force in 1-2 years...**8****ANTONIO PENA**
Asistencia Asesoria y Admin.**FACTS** Position: President/Booker..... Years in Position: 2... Age: ... Previous Positions: 9, —...**ANALYSIS** Through his success in Mexico's AAA, and since AAA is broadcast in the United States, Pena had influence just through that. Pena also booked major shows at the Los Angeles Sports Arena... But Pena made moves during '94 to bring AAA to every United States television set through publicity on WCW programs and on pay-per-view. With the style he promotes and his dedication to learning about this industry through worldwide travel and sincere observations, he like Heyman broke many traditional rules. For Pena, he broke tradition in Mexico and the U.S...**MITIGATING FACTORS** He is held back by being a small part of a major communications company, Televisa. The speed of his ability to make major moves with AAA into the U.S. is glacier-like. Much of AAA's influence in the U.S. had to do with actions he delegated to Ron Skoler...**FORECAST** Increase... This is a tough call. With the unstable Mexican economy, the U.S. may become a more important market for AAA, or he may have to concentrate so much on stabilizing his primary market that the U.S. will be put on a back burner...

9

JIM CORNETTE
Smoky Mountain Wrestling

FACTS Position: President/Performer... Years in Position: 3... Age: 33... Previous Ratings: 5, 8...

ANALYSIS Cornette remained one of only four or five promoters in the U.S. employing wrestlers full-time and developing new talent. He continued to put together an angle-packed weekly broadcast that showed others how to keep dense storylines going with limited resources. He had his best year in terms of big show attendance and, while financially shaky at times according to what he told his wrestlers, SMW did solidify itself as part of the industry's regional landscape...

MITIGATING FACTORS He drops on this list partially because others moved up and partially because his promotion stagnated in some ways. Many of his wrestlers made barely sustainable pay. His method of booking and promoting, which while well-executed and polished, is not contributing many so-called "new, progressive ideas" that influence the overall landscape, so his sphere of influence was relegated to within SMW. He stated when he started SMW that he has no desire to grow beyond a successful regional promotion. That appears to remain his stance...

FORECAST Steady... He will do more of the same in '95, barring any promotional disasters...

10

JERRY LAWLER
World Wrestling Federation

FACTS Position: Partner USWA/Wrestler with WWF, USWA, independents... Years in Position: 16/27... Age: 46...

ANALYSIS Lawler had as large of a presence as any wrestler had in the U.S. in 1994. His influence in the USWA is that of booker, promoter, and main event wrestler. He has major influence hiring and firing and overall direction of the oldest regional promotion in the U.S.

He filled a valuable role for the WWF after Bobby Heenan left, becoming the top color commentator in the promotion. He made Monday Night Raw's "King's Court" segment the most successful segment of its kind since Piper's Pit and probably had something to do with Raw's continued ratings success. He wrestled less for the WWF in '94 than when he first entered the WWF in '93, but still provided the WWF with a stable, well-known veteran to help a relatively young crew establish itself.

MITIGATING FACTORS Because of its lack of innovation, his influence of the USWA doesn't extend beyond the sphere of the USWA territory. His realm of influence in '94 did more to sustain the status quo than change the future of the industry...

FORECAST Steady... He'll remain the main eventer for at least one more year in the USWA...

11-15

RON SKOLER... LINDA MCMAHON...
TOD GORDON... SHAWN MICHAELS... ROYCE GRACIE...

11/Shawn Michaels (WWF Wrestler; Age: 29; Previous Rankings: —, —). Although he sat out five months, he was a major player in the WWF at the beginning and end of the year. His match at Wrestlemania established two things: (1) To be a credible, entertaining heel in the mid-'90s, you need not be a bodybuilder or monster freak; and (2) he was ready to be a main event WWF wrestler. From half of a popular teeny bopper tag team, he grew into the industry's most entertaining, all-around most talented heel. His work behind the mic and in the ring set a standard for others to achieve and kept many people interested in wrestling who, without a strong heel to dislike (or love to hate), would have sought entertainment elsewhere. His influence in the WWF front office grew as he became one of the top one or two contact men for Vince McMahon. McMahon ran major ideas by "player-rep" Michaels and looked to him for contemporary concepts throughout the year. Look for Michaels's influence to grow in '95 as he solidifies his main event position and takes part in even more top level booking meetings...

12/Ron Skoler (Promoter ICW/AAA; Age 36; Previous Rankings: —, 15). Skoler could have finished higher had he done more actual promoting of events in the U.S., although he was also slowed by a lack of apparent commitment by AAA to aggressively expand into the U.S. market. He was instrumental in signing a working agreement with WCW which led to his greatest influence on the industry in 1994, which was the AAA pay-per-view event, exposing the AAA product to its most expansive U.S. audience ever... Forecast: Decrease. Early in '95 there were few signs that Skoler was going to take the initiative or be given the opportunity by AAA to go all out in expanding his role in bringing AAA to the U.S. on a larger scale...

13/Linda McMahon (President WWF; Age 40s; Previous Positions: —, 13). McMahon

remains in the top 15 because she runs the administrative end of the company, has the ear of wrestling's most powerful promoter (her husband), and in 1994 played an instrumental role in McMahon's legal defense. Her public interaction with Vince at the trial showed for the first time what type of professional relationship with him she has as their exchanges appeared to be that of equal partners... Forecast: Steady...

14/Tod Gordon (Owner/Promoter ECW; Age 39; Previous Rankings: —, 11)... While Gordon's company gained more success in '94 than in '93, he drops on this list only because, after laying the foundation for ECW and hiring Paul Heyman, he gave Heyman tremendous creative control over the company. He is still an equal financial partner and has tremendous influence in the future direction of ECW... Forecast: Increase. Even as ECW expands, Heyman will remain the primary influence in day-to-day ops, but as equal partner he could become a big time player...

15/Royce Gracie (UFC Competitor; Age: 29; Previous Rankings: —, —). As an undersized super-skilled, tough-man champion, and as his name recognition and popularity grew, Gracie opened the door for smaller wrestlers with perceived dominant skills to be champions again. Few people on the street familiar with the UFC and traditional worked pro wrestling would bet against Gracie in a match against Hulk Hogan or Diesel. Whether it's totally real or not, the UFC tournaments are pro wrestling in its truest form—a submission style almost-no-rules, fight between athletes of many different backgrounds all trying to knock out or wrestle their opponent to the mat. The success of Gracie and UFC led to the Kimo character in the WWF and to WCW exploring the possibility of heading a competing UFC style pay-per-view based promotion. As UFC's popularity grows, the traditional pro wrestling promoters will have to deal with the

NOTEBOOK

PREVIOUS RANKINGS 1993: Vince McMahon, Bill Watts, Pat Patterson, Ric Flair, Hulk Hogan, Jim Ross, Dave Meltzer, Jim Cornette, Dusty Rhodes, and Jerry Jarrett...

1994: Vince McMahon, Eric Bischoff, Pat Patterson, Jerry Jarrett, Jim Cornette, Ric Flair, Dusty Rhodes, Dave Meltzer, Antonio Pena, Paul Heyman, Tod Gordon, Hulk Hogan, Linda McMahon, Vader, Ron Skoler, Jim Crockett...

DROP-OFFS Vader was listed last year due to his top heel position in WCW and the value he gave WCW in international negotiations. In 1994 his presence led to UWFI interest in establishing a working agreement. That interest gave WCW leverage in negotiating a new agreement with New Japan which was consummated in '95.

Behind the scenes in WCW he worries about himself and nothing else, thus his sphere of influence is limited.

Jerry Jarrett made the list last year due to his booking position with the WWF. This year he had a quieter role back in Memphis. Lawler edged him out due to Lawler's on-air influence nationwide.

Dusty Rhodes was relegated from booker of WCW to color commentator and part time wrestler with WCW.

Jim Crockett made the top 15 last year, but showed in '94 that he has no plans to make his style progressive, but rather plans to operate a throwback, traditional organization which will have little influence throughout the industry.

TOP 100

1994 WORLDWIDE RATINGS

1	Tosdhiaki Kawada (2/5)	All Japan
2	Kenta Kobashi (1/1)	All Japan
3	Chris Benoit (6/4)	ECW
4	Hiroshi Hase (3/3)	New Japan
5	Misuhara Misawa (7/16)	All Japan
6	Great Sasuke (26/30)	New Japan
7	Sabu (12/42)	ECW
8	Shawn Michaels (9/8)	WWF
9	Jushin Liger (4/2)	New Japan
10	Steve Williams (28/52)	All Japan
11	Psicosis (22/NR)	AAA
12	Eddy Guerrero (16/38)	AAA/NJ
13	Negro Casas (14/10)	EMLL
14	Bret Hart (10/12)	WWF
15	Rey Misterio Jr. (37/-)	AAA
16	Vader (5/11)	WCW/UWFI
17	Stan Hansen (8/25)	All Japan
18	Nobuhiko Takada (24/56)	UWFI
19	El Samurai (25/43)	New Japan
20	El Hijo Del Santo (33/35)	AAA
21	Shinjiro Otani (91/-)	New Japan
22	La Parka (65/-)	AAA
23	Dan Kroffat (13/18)	All Japan
24	Super Delphin (43/-)	Michinoku
25	Cactus Jack (36/32)	ECW/SMW
26	Blue Panther (41/-)	AAA
27	Keiji Muto (18/13)	New Japan
28	1-2-3 Kid (27/29)	WWF
29	Masa Chono (20/15)	New Japan
30	Jun Akiyama (32/-)	All Japan
31	Ric Flair (11/7)	WCW
32	Steve Austin (17/33)	WCW
33	Fuerza Guerrera (72/46)	AAA
34	Akira Taue (39/-)	All Japan
35	Terry Funk (31/50)	IWA
36	Shiro Koshinaka (79/-)	New Japan
37	Shinya Hashimoto (NR/-)	New Japan
38	Owen Hart (54/68)	WWF
39	Ultimo Dragon Asai (29/19)	EMLL
40	Silver King (68/62)	UWA
41	Heavy Metal Casas (15/-)	EMLL
42	Chris Candido (51/-)	SMW
43	Juventud Guerrera (NR/-)	AAA
44	Flyboy Rocco Rock (97/-)	ECW
45	Shane Douglas (47/48)	ECW
46	Too Cold Scorpio (53/-)	ECW
47	Tsoyoshi Kikuchi (23/6)	All Japan
48	Al Snow (-/-)	ECW
49	El Dandy (90/64)	EMLL
50	Doug Furnas (49/58)	All Japan
51	Emilio Charles Jr. (-/-)	EMLL
52	Hayabusa (-/-)	FMW
53	Jerry Estrada (74/55)	AAA
54	Scott Steiner (67/44)	New Japan
55	Razor Ramon (-/-)	WWF
56	Sting (55/34)	WCW
57	Hakushi (G. Shinzaki) (-/-)	WWF
58	Yoshinari Ogawa (35/40)	All Japan
59	Brian Pillman (19/14)	WCW
60	Jimmy Del Rey (34/-)	WWF
61	David Finlay (62/-)	Europe
62	Shiryu (-/-)	Michinoku
63	Takao Omori (-/-)	All Japan
64	Tracy Smothers (31/75)	SMW
65	Dean Malenko (46/-)	ECW
66	Octagon (92/-)	AAA
67	Taka Michinoku (-/-)	Michinoku
68	Masakatsu Funaki (-/-)	Pancrase
69	Tazmaniac (-/-)	ECW
70	Takayuki Iizuka (48/67)	New Japan
71	Kensuke Sasaki (64/17)	New Japan
72	Rick Morton (69/74)	SMW
73	Arn Anderson (42/22)	WCW
74	Johnny Smith (88/-)	All Japan
75	Lord Steven Regal (-/-)	WCW
76	Brian Christopher (73/-)	USWA
77	Bestia Salvaje (76/31)	AAA
78	El Texano (-/-)	EMLL
79	El Felino (-/-)	EMLL
80	Dustin Rhodes (58/27)	WCW
81	Johnny Grunge (-/-)	ECW
82	Tommy Rogers (63/70)	All Japan
83	Johnny B. Badd (-/-)	WCW
84	Arn Anderson (22/42)	WCW
85	Steve Armstrong (-/-)	SMW
86	Chris Jericho (77/-)	EMLL
87	Rick Steiner (-/77)	WCW
88	Bam Bam Bigelow (98/51)	WWF
89	Fatu (89/-)	WWF
90	Johnny Ace (-/100)	All Japan
91	Bobby Eaton (50/26)	WCW
92	Jean Paul LeVesque (-/-)	WCW
93	Perro Aguayo (-/-)	AAA
94	Gary Albright (-/-)	UWFI
95	Doug Gilbert (-/-)	New Japan
96	Riki Choshu (93/79)	New Japan
97	Ron Van Damme (-/-)	New Japan
98	Mike Enos (-/-)	New Japan
99	Dirty White Boy (52/99)	SMW
100	Jean Paul LeVesque (-/-)	WCW

SUMMARY OF CRITERIA

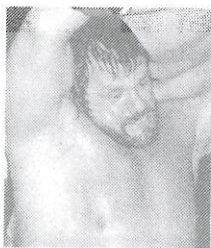
Pro Wrestling Torch's "Top 100 WorldWide Ratings" is compiled with input from over two dozen international tape viewers, professional wrestlers, and promoters. The rankings are meant to be reflective of workrate during the year 1994, with workrate being a combination of in-ring skills (athletic ability, ring psychology) and work ethic (including consistency). A wrestler who wrestles during the year but is not active due to retirement, death, or long-term injury (expected to be out longer than a year) at the end of the year, is not eligible for the list, although one need not be active full time throughout the entire year to be eligible.

Although workrate isn't based on whether a wrestler is pushed by the promotion he works for, a pushed wrestler does usually have more opportunity to show off skill and a consistently high work ethic. Charisma does tend to get factored in as a positive, although the vast majority of the criteria goes to workrate. These ratings over the years do tend to favor, all other things being equal, a wrestler with an innovative and high-risk ring style over those whose repertoire of moves tends to draw on examples from the past. Strength, legitimate toughness, and size are not factors in these ratings (i.e. in comparing Vader to Misterio Jr.), although those classified as "midgets" or "minis" are not ranked, if only for the same reason that women aren't ranked—because they wrestle mainly among themselves and not against wrestlers in other classifications.

These rankings do not reflect a wrestler's ability to draw fans to an arena (which combines workrate with a heavy dose of charisma, interview skills, gimmick, etc.), therefore many who work within the business see these ratings as somewhat insignificant to the big picture. Nevertheless, within the industry there is a pride, especially among the wrestlers who rank high in this poll, to out-work and out-innovate and out-dazzle their fellow wrestlers. These rankings reflect those who succeeded in 1994 at doing just that.

While these ratings are subjective, the sampling of votes is diverse enough that many points of view are represented, including a limited (but expanding from year to year) input from wrestlers who have first-hand working knowledge of strengths and weaknesses of various wrestlers listed in this poll. There is a much greater agreement among those polled regarding who belongs in the top quadrant as opposed to who belongs in the third and the fourth quadrants, especially when comparing various positions in those quadrants.

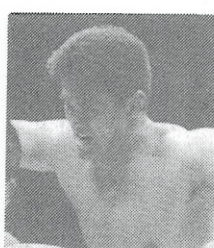
***In parenthesis next to each ranked wrestler is where they ranked the last two years ('93/'94). To the right of each name is their promotional affiliation as of Dec. 31, 1994.



Steve Williams



Rey Misterio Jr.



Jun Akiyama

Departures from 1993's Top 100 List: Each wrestler's '93 ranking is listed in parenthesis. Rick Steamboat (30, retired), Marty Janetty (38, virtually inactive), The Boss (40, a/k/a Guardian Angel), Tom Prichard (44), Masa Fuchi (45), Eddie Gilbert (56), Akira Nogami (57), Genichiro Tenryu (59), Terry Gordy (60), Terry Taylor (61, virtually inactive in WCW), Brad Armstrong (70, didn't get a chance in WCW), Jerry Lawler (71, ultra conservative), Art Barr (75, died during the year), El Gran Hamada (78), Curt Hennig (80, inactive), Jeff Jarrett (82, had stronger workrate in the USWA), Chris Adams (83), Scott Armstrong (84), Paul Orndorff (85, unimpressive year in WCW), Richard Slinger (86), Pat Tanaka (87), Marcus Bagwell (95, didn't expand skills, bogged down by series with Orndorff & Paul Roma), Mike Winner (96), Ted DiBiase (99, retired due to injury), Naoki Sano (100).;

Ratings Notebook: Both Kenta Kobashi and Toshiaki Kawada received numerous picks for the number one spot. No other wrestler was voted number one... Shinjiro Otani took the biggest jump of anyone in the first quadrant, from 91 to 21. La Parka also jumped impressively from 65 to 22 after turning into a star in AAA during '94... Shinya Hashimoto made the highest debut, all the more remarkable since he is a veteran. He surprised a lot of people by not only being a credible heavyweight champion for New Japan, but also being an important half of some memorable and good title bouts... Vader is the only WCW wrestler in the first quadrant as WCW had relatively its worst in-ring year ever... Shawn Michaels and Bret Hart were the only two WWF wrestlers in the first quadrant... Rookie Juventud Guerrera was the highest rookie debut at 43... Hakushi debuted at 57 thanks to a strong year in Michinoku Pro under the name Ginsei Shinzaki... Al Snow was the fourth debut in the second quadrant, getting his first national exposure in '94... Razor Ramon debuted impressively at 55... Ric Flair was included based on the presumption his "retirement" was temporary. Last year was his first year out of the top 10. He dropped into the second quadrant this year... Brian Pillman took a big drop from 19 to 59 due to inactivity and no memorable matches... Due to his death, Art Barr was not included in the rankings. However, had he been eligible, he would have rated in the top 15 based on those who did include him in their rankings...

Promotional Analysis: The following is a list of the number of wrestlers each promotion had representing them in the Top 100 Ratings: All Japan (15); New Japan (16); ECW (10); WWF (9); WCW (14); AAA (12); EMLL (9); UWA (1); UWFI (3); Michinoku Pro (3); Europe (1); USWA (1); Pancrase (1); SMW (6); FMW (1); IWA (1);

The following are promotional and national breakdowns of the Top 100 Rankings on the previous page. In the U.S. promotional breakdowns the ratings go beyond those who made the Top 100 list. The ratings are based on the respective promotions' rosters as of January 1995.

WWF Top 20: Shawn Michaels (8), Bret Hart (14), 1-2-3 Kid (28), Owen Hart (38), Razor Ramon (55), Hakushi (57), Bam Bam Bigelow (88), British Bulldog (88), Fatu (89), Kwang, Diesel, Tatanka, Jimmy Del Rey, Tom Prichard, Lex Luger, Bob Holly, Jeff Jarrett, Aldo Montoya, Billy Gunn, Bart Gunn.

WCW Top 20: Vader (16), Ric Flair (31), Steve Austin (32), Sting (56), Brian Pillman (59), Lord Steven Regal (75), Dustin Rhodes (80), Johnny B. Badd (83), Arn Anderson (84), Bobby Eaton (91), Jean Paul Levesque (100), Randy Savage, Brad Armstrong, Jerry Sags, Booker T, Marcus Bagwell, Bunkhouse Buck, Bubba Rogers, Terry Taylor, Dallas Page.

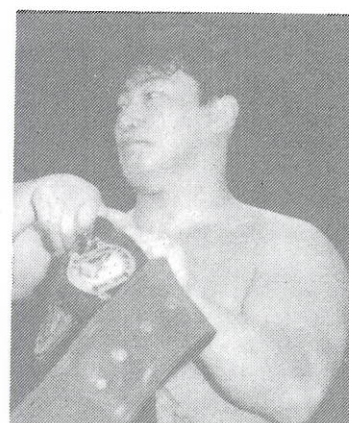
ECW Top 20: Chris Benoit (3), Sabu (7), Cactus Jack (25), Flyboy Rocco Rock (44), Shane Douglas (45), Too Cold Scorpio (46), Al Snow (48), Dean Malenko (65), Johnny Grunge (81), Tazmaniac (69), Pitbull #2, Tommy Dreamer, Mikey Whipwreck, Pitbull #1, Tully Blanchard, Ron Simmons, Steve Richards, Chad Austin, J.T. Smith, Sandman.

SMW Top 10: Cactus Jack (25), Chris Candido (42), Tracy Smothers (64), Rick Morton (72), Steve Armstrong (85), Dirty White Boy (99), Scott Armstrong, Buddy Landell, Boo Bradley, Robert Gibson.

USWA Top 10: Brian Christopher (76), Doug Gilbert (95), Wolfie D, J.C. Ice, Sid Vicious, Jerry Lawler, Tommy Rich, Spellbinder, Doug Basham, Scott Studd.

Mexico Top 20: (all 20 are in Top 100 rankings) Psicosis, Eddy Guerrero, Negro Casas, Rey Misterio Jr., El Hijo Del Santo, La Parka, Blue Panther, Fuerza Guerrera, Ultimo Dragon, Silver King, Heavy Metal Casas, Juventud Guerrera, El Dandy, Emilio Charles Jr. Jerry Estrada, Octagon, Bestia Salvaje, El Texano, El Felino, Perro Aguayo.

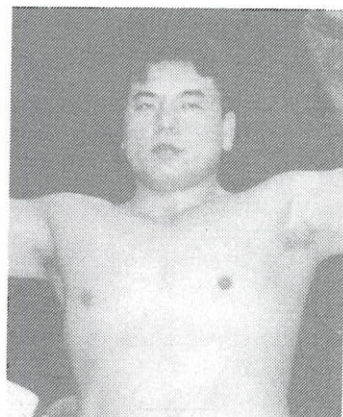
Japan Top 20: (all 20 are in Top 100 rankings) Toshiaki Kawada, Kenta Kobashi, Hiro Hase, Mitsuhara Misawa, Great Sasuke, Jushin Liger, Steve Williams, Stan Hansen, Nobuhiko Takada, El Samurai, Shinjiro Otani, Dan Kroffat, Super Delphin, Keiji Muto, Masa Chono, Jun Akiyama, Akira Taue, Terry Funk, Shiro Koshinaka, Shinya Hashimoto.



Kenta Kobashi



Shawn Michaels



Mitsuhara Misawa



Shinya Hashimoto

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BRUCE MITCHELL'S (LARGEST EVER!) FOURTH ANNUAL YEAR-END

"Homework Sucks!"

—Beavis and Butt-head with the final word on Hulk Hogan and his "demandments."

Wow. 1994. What a year.

After a year of intense wrestling foreplay (yeech) it is time for 1994's absolute climax.

The Largest Ever Year in Review Quiz.

By now you, the faithful reader, know the drill. Answer all of the questions in the *Torch's* 1994 Quiz and win a fabulous prize from the world of professional wrestling.

And if you know the world of professional wrestling well enough that you, not those two so-called experts, should be writing these newsletters and making exorbitant salaries, then you should step up to the challenge of this quiz.

After all, last year's winner won an Immunity from Prosecution Keep Out of Jail Free Card that he immediately used during his summer vacation.

So instead of spending the rest of 1994 in the Crossbar Hotel, Terry Bollea was able to sign a multi-million dollar contract to mastermind the Hulk Hogan's Own Self Esteem Enhancement Seminar.

And he feels so much better.

Now I have a special announcement.

This year the *Torch*, in conjunction with the IWC's Ron Skoler, is giving away a once in a lifetime chance to do color commentary with Mike Tenay on the next AAA, I mean IWC, pay-per-view. You also win the chance to spend a lot of time massaging Ron's always fragile ego and suggesting wildly inappropriate wrestlers to appear on...

on...

on...

Oh God, I can't go on.

I'm haunted.

I can't sleep at night.

I keep thinking of two words.

"The Warlord."

Yes, The Warlord.

Ron Skoler was right. I had no business saying Skoler booked The Warlord on any of his shows in my column on AAA, I mean IWC, wrestling. I knew better. I should have said Diamond Dallas Page or Mando Guerrero.

But I didn't.

And because of that, an entire column collapsed.

And I had one of those moments of self knowledge so intimate and revealing that Daniel Day Lewis could star in the movie.

Mr. Skoler, an accredited lawyer, saw straight



through me. I was nothing but a mean spirited crybaby.

No more. I'm tired of hurting good people's feelings.

Consider this year's quiz a heartfelt tribute to Wrestling, the World's Greatest Sport, The Blue Collar Ballet. After all 1994 was the year Wrestling's All-Time Greatest Star returned to the squared circle, the year Vince McMahon was proven right and totally exonerated, the year wrestling's Two Greatest Stars finally settled it in the confines of a steel cage, the year a youngblood promoter created the cutting edge AAA, I mean IWC, the year great independent promoters started the next big stars on the Road to Immortality.

I know now that we're all just brothers and a few sisters in the fraternity of wrestling. I've been humbled in the face of greatness.

So this year's quiz is a Valentine to our beloved sport, a celebration of the thing that gives most of us more pleasure than sex, the thing we think about night and day.

And, because I love and appreciate you all, the answers to Bruce Mitchell's First Annual Peace and Love Wrestling Quiz appear at no charge at the end of this selection.

Enjoy!

Yours in Wrestling!

Bruce M.

Instructions: Please take 60 minutes to complete this quiz. Just as in wrestling contract negotiations, you are on your honor.

You may begin now...

1. Six hundred thirteen thousand dollars is:

a) more than the net profit of the pay-per-view retirement match between the two biggest stars of this era—Ric Flair and Hulk Hogan.

b) more than the gross revenue for 1994 of either Smoky Mountain Wrestling, Extreme Championship Wrestling, or the United States Wrestling Association.

c) more than the combined houses of every show Hulk Hogan appeared at in the United States in 1994.

d) the amount fans spent on programs in one night at the Tokyo Dome All Japan Women's show in November.

e) all of the above.

2. Butch But True Department (fill in the blank): SMW promoter Jim Cornette informed me in a phone call at three in the morning that the next time he saw me he would _____ me until I fought him.

a) pinch

b) fondle

c) slap

d) tickle

3. Who are Cody Boyns, David Skolnick, and Ron Lemieux?

a) Three names picked randomly out of the phone book.

b) Some guys I used to drink with in high school.

c) Flamenco guitar artists for Windham Hill Records.

d) Three of the Real Wrestling Hotline's biggest stars.

4. What is the best estimate of a capacity crowd at the world famous ECW Arena in Philadelphia, according to attendance figures in the *Torch*?

a) six hundred fifty.

b) eight hundred.

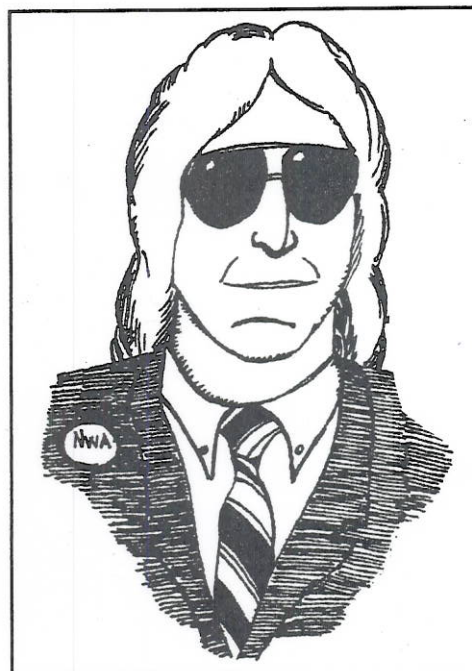
c) one thousand.

d) thirteen hundred fifty

e) a whole lot

f) since this is really a metaphysics question, you know, what is truth?

5. True or False: FanBoy Oddity and health professional Mike Lano, or "Who's that crackpot dentist with the Wayne's World TV show?" as a world famous, recently retired wrestler put it (one guess), showed a tribute to Philadelphia wrestling on his cable access show featuring Polaroids of wrestlers drenched in blood for over eight minutes—while the Oscar nominated dirges from the AIDS drama "Philadelphia" played in the background.



6. Pick the one wrestler from this list who did not appear in the results section of either the *Torch* or the *Observer* in the year 1994.

a) Van Vardigan

b) Knuckles Nelson

c) Hunter Thompson

d) Flash Flanagan

e) Flaming Youth

f) Bam Bam Coalson

g) H.R. Puf 'N' Stuff

h) Frank Gotch

7. Three Out of Four Years Quiz Classic: Universal Wrestling Federation Impresario Herb "Rubber Ball" Abrams celebrated the enormous success of his Las Vegas Hilton nationally televised wrestling extravaganza by:

a) treating Tonight Show host Jay Leno to a sumptuous dinner at the best restaurant in town in thanks for that plug.

b) sending a case of champagne to the executives at SportsChannel America in appreciation.

c) personally writing a thank you note to everyone who attended the show.

d) quickly hopping in his rented limo and stiffing the Las Vegas Hilton (?!?), the media, and the wrestlers for the cost of the show.

8. Over-priced department: Two hundred dollars...

a) will buy you an escort for the night in the Philippines.

b) will buy you an ounce of crack.

c) will buy you Mark Madden for a week.



9. Which group has the youngest average age?

- a) WCW Main Eventers Hulk Hogan, Ric Flair, and Vader.
- b) WWF New Generation Bret Hart, Diesel, and The British Bulldog.
- c) USWA Main Eventers Jerry Lawler, Bill Dundee, and Tommy Rich.
- d) SMW Stars Ricky Morton, Robert Gibson, and The Dirty White Boy.
- e) NBA retirees James Worthy, Michael Jordan, and Mike Gminski.

10. Yeah, It's True Dept.: What renowned professional wrestling promoter was seen beaming like a schoolgirl as he carried the bags of "Dick" Flair into the hotel the night before Slamboree in Philadelphia?

- a) Toots Mondt
- b) Jack Pfeiffer
- c) Phil Zacko
- d) Tod Gordon

11. What did an incensed NWA promoter Dennis Coraluzzo do when ECW lied to him and made him and his organization look like complete idiots at their bogus NWA Title Tournament?

- a) Shut down ECW with an injunction from the NWA lawyer.
- b) Tried to throttle Tod Gordon with his bare hands.
- c) Pulled a gun and made Shane Douglas "take it back."
- d) Cut a promo for ECW's TV show—that required three takes.

12. Match the quote below with the wrestling luminary who actually said it:

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| a) "Help! I'm working without a net!" | 1) Gene Okerlund |
| b) "Who in this room hasn't seen guys like Snoop Doggy Dogg and Al Sharpton and not just wanted to shoot them in the head?" | 2) Hulk Hogan |
| c) I'd like to think (Vince) wasn't aware of how seriously ill I was at the time (he let me go.) He has been known to flex his muscles..." | 3) Butt-head |
| d) "Let's hear it for the Jews!" | 4) Rick Rood |
| e) "The young girl is a victim in this, too." | 5) Jim Hellwig |
| f) "If you had a chance to get a job, but your boss told you to take off all of your clothes and have mad passionate sex with him, you would have the personal choice not to." | 6) Jim Ross |
| g) "I wouldn't mess with my 'nads." | 7) Bobby Heenan |
| h) "Thanks for listening. It's been excruciating." | 8) Jim Cornette |
| i) "Now that I'm bigger than wrestling." | 9) Jerry Lawler |
| j) "I don't need steroids to look good." | 10) Herb Abrams |

13. AAA's 5-4, 130 lbs. Rey Misterio Jr. destroyed the size myth and became a 19 year old sensation in Mexico and on the West Coast by skillfully combining state of the art flying moves with an appealing "kid brother" persona. How did he celebrate his success and acclaim?

- a) He bought some colorful new costumes to wear in the ring.
- b) He got a starring role alongside Eric Estrada in a Hispanic soap opera.
- c) He went on tour with New Japan Pro Wrestling.
- d) He gained thirty pounds of water-logged muscle in six weeks.

14. Which hip, happening native Detroit athlete did Bobby "The Brain" Heenan rhapsodize over at the beginning of Halloween Havoc?

- a) Barry Sanders
- b) Grant Hill
- c) Isaiah Thomas
- d) Al Kaline

15. *Wrestling Chatterbox* editor Georgiann Makropoulus was seen in public weeping tears of gratitude this year when...

- a) Bruno Sammartino was awarded a commendation by the President for informing high school athletes of the evils of drug abuse.
- b) she won ten million dollars in the New York State Lottery.
- c) the medical profession announced a cure for cancer.
- d) Vince McMahon beat the rap and didn't have to shut down Titan Sports.

16. Georgiann Makropoulus and some other even lesser lights in the sheet biz put together the "Underground Annual," a publication put together to "blow away the *Torch Yearbook*" or

so they claimed. What was the most memorable thing about this remarkable publication?

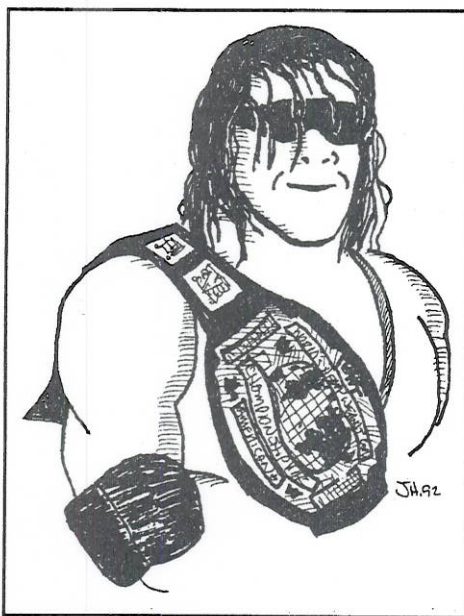
- a) Nothing.
- b) It sold a whopping 107 copies.

17. NWA promoter Jim Crockett's return to the wrestling wars was slowed when...

- a) he had a falling out with booker Paul Heyman.
- b) he could not find any television stations to carry his program.
- c) he moved his base from Tennessee to Texas.
- d) he had to stop to ask customers if they wanted sprinkles on their ice cream.
- e) All of the above.

18. Global Wrestling Federation Head Grey Pierson had another stellar year when he... oh, screw it, it's too easy...

19. Who did Rick Rude beat in 1994 to win the prestigious NWA World Title?



- a) I don't know, maybe Sting?
- b) It wasn't Ric Flair, was it?
- c) Hiroshi Hase?
- d) Really, I totally forgot that.

20. Who did Chris Candido beat in 1994 to win the prestigious NWA World Title?

- a) Firebreaker Chip
- b) Inferno #2
- c) Greg Valentine
- d) Tracy Smothers
- e) an attorney

21. True or False: WCW television shows were so lousy that Eric Bischoff had to pay people to watch them.

22. Ric Flair, the Greatest Wrestler of All Time, thanked his loyal fans for two decades of unswerving support when he...

- a) went on a multi-city retirement tour.
- b) sponsored a charity bash at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Charlotte and announced his candidacy for Governor.
- c) hosted a WCW All-Nighter edition career retrospective with Rick Steamboat.
- d) took a big payoff to lose to and massage the ego of the wrestler his fans have always hated the most.

23. Vince McMahon claimed during his trial that he wanted the truth to come out because then he would be found innocent. Titan administrative assistant Anita Scales was praised by both the prosecution and the defense for her forthrightness. Vince was so moved by her honesty that he...

- a) posed with her in front of the media after the acquittal.
- b) invited her to the manse for the victory party.
- c) transferred her to the same department as Shane McMahon so that McMahon Jr. could benefit from her example.
- d) quietly dropped her from Titan's employ at the end of the year.

24. *Torch* columnist Chris Zavisla was hailed for his unique in-depth articles on wrestling in Japan. Zavisla also wrote several memorable columns praising rising mega-star Sabu. Zavisla was too modest to mention during these columns that he was able to go so in depth with his subject because...

- a) he worked for Sabu on Sabu's Michigan independent shows.
- b) in fact he managed Sabu in his "Gideon Wainwright" persona.

c) not only that, he put together and shared in any profits of a "Best of Sabu" tape.

d) of course, that has *nothing* to do with all of that good press Sabu gets from Chris.

25. Joe "Who Could Forget the GWF" Pedicino spoke out and put at risk his beloved job as An Important Guy at Marietta SMW shows with his gutsy display of principle. What was the one moral outrage that so moved Pedicino to take a stand?

- a) The bait and switch frauds perpetuated by SMW on "his" fans.
- b) The bloody footage shown of the Heavenly Bodies-Thrill Seekers match on the religious station Pedicino worked for.
- c) The race bating and hate mongering of the Gangstas tag team.
- d) Tammy Fytch threatening to kill her own cat in a skit that wouldn't fool a five year old.

26. Was Joe Pedicino actually going to make a stand and cut ties with SMW over a kitty, or as Cactus Jack put it, some pussy?

- a) What? And not get to meet'n'greet all of his fans at the shows? Aw Steve...
- b) Let's not go crazy... we can work this out, Jimmy...

27. True or False: A WCW employee walked backstage at an independent show, held up a twenty dollar bill, shouted "Awright, who wants to juice?" and two wrestlers raised their hands.

28. Dietrich Bonhoeffer Memorial Religious Philosophy Question: God punished Vince McMahon for ridiculing His Son when Vince had the Undertaker die and ascend to, uh, the ceiling by...

- a) taking away the fan interest of, whatta coincidence, the 'Taker.
- b) forcing McMahon to watch his former "best friend" Hulk Hogan reinflate.
- c) making him sell his beloved IcoPro franchise.
- d) reserving a spot in Hell for him.

29. What was the farthest Extreme that the legendary ex-NWA champion Terry Funk reached to stay over in the business during 1994?

- a) He wrote a letter to Atsushi Onita and gave it to the Japanese press.
- b) He started doing moonsaults on 50 year old knees.
- c) He let the Sheik set those 50 year old knees on fire.
- d) He wrapped himself in barbed wire from

head to toe.

e) He called for fans to throw hundreds of steel chairs at him.

f) He constantly told the ECW fans that "sniff—hardcore fans are the greatest—sob."

30. Who did Stars & Stripes beat in 1994 to win their first ever WCW Tag Team Championship?

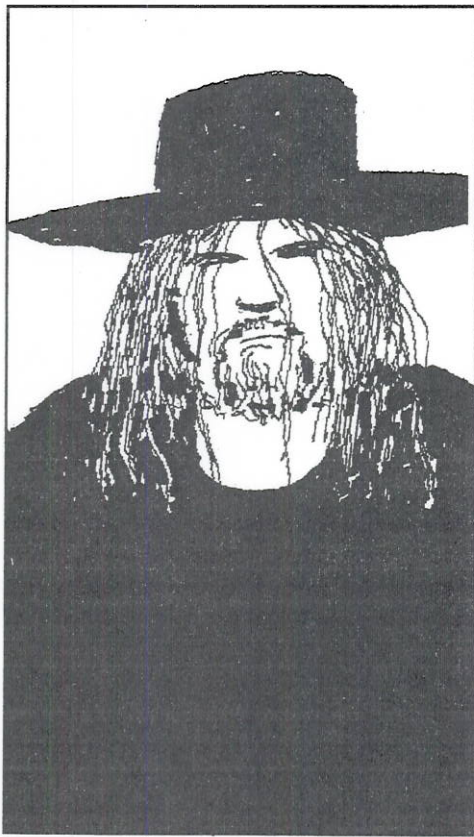
- a) How the hell would I know?
- b) What is this, *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*?
- c) I forgot, is that Jeff Cohen's promotion or something?
- d) Well, I bet they don't remember, either.

31. What was the absolute highlight of the Tenth Anniversary of Wrestlemania?

- a) Bret Hart's title victory over Yokozuna.
- b) Owen Hart's four star victory over his brother Bret Hart.
- c) Razor Ramon's five star ladder match with Shawn Michaels.
- d) Burt Reynolds's six star Absolut intoxication.

32. Wayne Coulter, Dave Meltzer's boss on the Real Wrestling Hotline, has another job. He...

- a) works in the retail garment industry.
- b) owns a telemarketing firm.
- c) works with WCW's merchandising arm.



33. Starved for Attention Dept.: Ron Skoler, the nattily attired IWC head, celebrated another successful house show in Los Angeles on Aug. 6 by walking right up to ringside during the Faras Incredebles main event escorted by the beautiful Mimi Lessos who had wrestled, sorta, earlier that evening. (Imagine Eric Bischoff pulling this same stunt with Sherri at Starrcade. Hogan would fire him.) The fans reacted to this blatant attention-seeking stunt by...

- a) chanting "IWC, IWC" at their benefactor.
- b) presenting roses to Mimi.
- c) bowing at Ron's feet.
- d) totally ignoring both of them.

34. The Undertaker vs. Undertaker match at the King of the Ring was a complete disaster ("The fans are stunned...") But it might have been even worse if the Hart brothers cage match had not run long preempting the original plans for the Undertaker vs. Undertaker match. What was actually planned for the finish?

- a) The Undertaker rips the clothes off the Faker and he runs away with just a jockstrap on.
- b) Lightning strikes during a test of strength, the lights go out, and when they return, only the Undertaker is left in a new outfit.

c) The Undertakers fight to a double DQ, then form a tag team against DiBiase's corporation.

d) The Undertaker beats the 'Faker and then the Faker dies and sinks into the ring.

35. Jeff Cohen's unheralded Championship Wrestling from Indiana got an enormous amount of local publicity for this young, ambitious entrepreneur. What unique babyface was the focus of this promotion?

- a) A Vince McMahon look-alike who set

himself on fire.

b) A fax machine that churned out an endless, rarely read stream of hype and phony letters praising Cohen.

- c) The pizza delivery guy.
- d) Jeff Cohen.

36. Special Math Question: Explain how the number of Rock & Roll Express SMW Tag Title victories times the number of wrestlers playing Doink plus the number of times Dustin Rhodes battled Bunkhouse Buck times the number of stars rated during All Japan Women shows equals to paying Hulk Hogan six million dollars.

37. What was the highlight of Hulk Hogan's triumphant return to wrestling in 1994?

- a) His own parade at Disney World.
- b) His world title win over longtime rival Ric Flair at Beach Brawl.
- c) His steel cage win over Flair, forcing Flair into "retirement."
- d) The look on his face during his first live television appearance when he realized the majority of fans were booing him.

38. Are You Gonna Go My Way Dept.: Which United States wrestling promotion eschewed the godawful, dated in-house "music" used by the other companies to make a deal to play great stuff by White Zombie, Beck, Salt 'n' Pepa, and Lenny Kravitz?

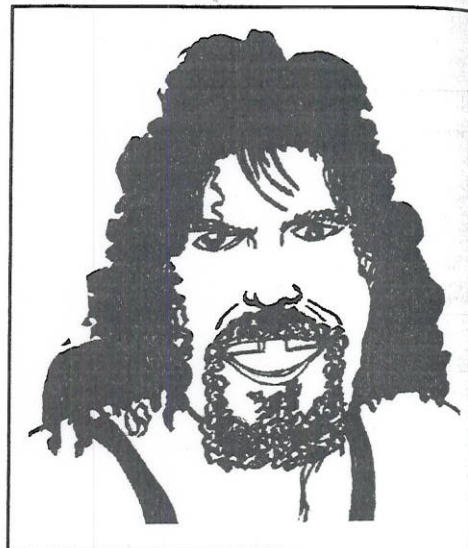
- a) The one headquartered in Titan Towers in Stamford, Conn.
- b) The one headquartered in the CNN Center in Atlanta, Ga.
- c) The one headquartered in the back room of a pawn shop in Philadelphia, Pa.

39. Who won Comeback of the Year in the 1994 *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* Year-End Awards?

- a) The Undertaker
- b) Hulk Hogan
- c) Jim Duggan
- d) Jim Ross

40. *Pro Wrestling Torch Weekly* passed its 300th issue during the past year. Editor/Publisher Wade Keller celebrated this milestone by...

- a) writing long, interminable descriptions of matches on WCW Clashes that anyone could watch for free.
- b) publishing long, interminable descriptions of television tapings including which wrestlers actually got to have squash matches on WWF Superstars in place of, like, real news.



c) writing long, interminable previews of pay-per-views that are consistently overly optimistic.

d) conducting a 13 part interview with Cactus Jack during which, at least, it's pretty certain Cactus didn't mutilate himself.

41. Who is the next Hulk Hogan?

- a) Ultimate Warrior
- b) Sting
- c) Lex Luger
- d) Hulk Hogan
- e) a 180 pound silent Brazilian

(Special thanks to John Hitchcock for his illustrations the last four years. These quizzes wouldn't be the same without his work.)

ANSWER KEY

(1) c; (2) c; (3) d; (4) e; (5) true; (6) h; (7) d; (8) c; (9) e; (10) d; (11) d; (12) 1/h, 2/i, 3/g, 4/j, 5/f, 6/c, 7/a, 8/b, 9/e, 10/d; (13) d; (14) d; (15) d; (16) a; (17) e; (18) No answer. Look for Jim Corckett in this space next year; (19) c; (20) d; (21) false; (22) d; (23) d; (24) d; (25) d; (26) a; (27) false, a \$10 bill; (28) a; (29) f; (30) a; (31) c; (32) c; (33) d; (34) b; (35) d; (36) d; (37) d; (38) c; (39) b, but shoulda been d; (40) a; (41) e.

PRIZES

Contestants are guaranteed to win these fabulous prizes...

First Prize: AAA, I mean IWC, color commentary job next to "Slick" Mike Tenay.

Second Prize: My home phone number, so you can pester me about Wednesday hotline segments.

Third Prize: The North Georgia Junior Heavyweight Title.

Fourth Prize: The NWA World Heavyweight Title.



1994 JAPAN

WRESTLING ENCYCLOPEDIA

BY CHRIS ZAVISA

If there were such a thing as a three sided coin, it would come in mighty handy right about now. Attempting to assess the pecking order of the Top Ten Japanese wrestling promotions in 1994 is far from an easy task. Nineteen-ninety-three was a banner year in Japan. It was a banner year in Japan in both the quality of its product and the profitability of its product. It might well have been a scrapbook year and something of a highwater mark in the 30 year history of Japanese pro wrestling.

This year there was some slippage in certain areas while gains were made in others. Some promotions advanced, some experienced declines, and still others seemed firmly stuck. Last year I selected All Japan Woman as the top promotion followed by New Japan and All Japan. This year, without the benefit of that special coin, I'm going to stand pat.

All three groups continued on their successful and profitable way in 1994. If anything did change in Japan, it is the margin of difference between the big three groups. You could probably take the three and rank them in any order and find solid factual justification for it. All three have excellent talent. All three can put on the Big Show. All three are expertly managed. The difference between them becomes very subjective and that ultimately rests in the eye of the beholder.

#1—All Japan Women (1991-#3, 1992-#3, 1993-#1)

At the start of 1993, AJW threw out the book and wrote a new one. They embarked on a risky strategy of promoting big shows in arenas holding 10,000 or more while still keeping to an active spot show schedule. Conventional wisdom said that such dreams were impractical for a women's group and they were reaching too far and would fail. Conventional wisdom was wrong.

In 1994, they took the biggest risk of all in booking the cavernous Tokyo Dome. They were attempting to take their astounding success to a much higher level. On Nov. 20, they sold 42,500 tickets to see women's wrestling. They not only completely shattered all existing records for women's attendance but came away with a tidy profit of over \$6 million for their efforts. And that does not include future revenue from the videotape of the event which is expected to take in at least another \$1.5 million.

This astounding success was in addition to a 250 day schedule that included 16,000 for their Yokohama Queendom show and another 15,560 at the Budokan Hall.

Nineteen-ninety-three proved they could do the Big Show. Nineteen-ninety-four also proved they could do it better than anybody else. Their ten hour Tokyo Dome show featured an eight woman tournament for a new inter-promotional title, won by the group's own Akira Hokuto. For most of the year it was also to be Hokuto's retirement from wrestling but those plans were scrapped in favor of her working a part-time schedule for as long as she desires. They had 23 bouts, four of which were actual shoots. Seven of the nineteen pro bouts were rated at between three and three-and-three-quarters stars. Another seven at four stars or better including a five-star effort by Manami Toyota and Aja Kong. If you take out the hour consumed by the four shooting contests, it might have surpassed their April 1993 DreamSlam cards in all-around

wrestling excellence.

The group had several pluses on the talent side. Mariko Yoshida returned from a severe neck injury and looked better than ever. Foreign import Reggie Bennett showed improvement and by year's end was holding her own. Two youngsters, Kumiko Mackawa and Rie Tamada made monthly progress and by year's end were having good matches in the three-star range. The tag team due of Etsuko Mita and Mima Shimoda elevated their game a notch or two and were clearly the group's best and most consistent regularly teamed pair.

On the down side, two of their biggest stars were lost to them for parts of the year. Akira Hokuto, arguably the greatest female wrestler of all time, worked only a handful of bouts appearing only on the biggest of shows. Bull Nakano, the woman who carried the group from the era of the Crush Girls and Dump Matsumoto to today, departed for the WWF. When she returned for the Nov. 20 Dome show she had noticeably lost a bit of her skills and workrate. It is expected she will not be available to the group until April 1995.

In 1993 they created waves of excitement with the tag team of Manami Toyota & Yoshiyo Yamada. They proved to be one of the best teams of all time almost always having bouts between four and five stars. As 1994 progressed their pairings became few in favor of pushing both as singles stars. Although they were the official holders of the WWWA World Tag Titles, they rarely defended them past the middle of the year. They did finally drop them at the Oct. 9 Wrestlemarinpiad to Kyoko & Takako Inoue. As expected, it was a match of the year caliber effort.

They continued to have inter-promotional talent exchanges with the other women's groups, but not as frequently.

They get the nod as Japan's best on the strength of their product. Simply put, on a night after night basis, there is more quality wrestling on an All Japan Women's card than on any other promotion. And in Japan, quality counts for a great deal.

All Japan Women's Calendar

1/4—Korakuen Hall: Another sellout crowd of 2,100 sees WWWA Tag Title holders Yamada & Toyota defeat Kyoko & Takako Inoue.

1/24—Tokyo: 4,350 pack Ota Ward Gym and Yamada & Toyota again successfully defend their tag titles this time defeating Mita & Shimoda. Aja Kong keeps her singles World Title defeating Yumiko Hotta.

2/27—Korakuen Hall: Toyota & Yamada turn back yet another challenge, this time from Aja Kong and Hasegawa in a three fall bout. Bull Nakano defeats Mita.

3/3—Korakuen Hall: 29 minutes of tremendous action sees Bull & Kyoko Inoue beat Kong & Toyota, plus Yamada battles Hasegawa to a 30 minute draw.

3/27—Yokohama: Their big Queendom show draws 16,000 for one of only three bouts featuring Akira Hokuto all year. Hokuto and Kandori battle among themselves but unite in time to defeat the monster team of Aja Kong & Bull Nakano in a four-and-a-half star bout.

4/20—Tokyo: Group announces it is giving up on its efforts to sign figure skating star Tonya Harding to appear at their upcoming Tokyo Dome show.

6/3—Korakuen Hall: Hotta pins Yamada in a brutal 20 minute kickfest and

Hasegawa pulls a major upset defeating Toyota.

6/10—Sapporo: 3,460 watch Toyota & Yamada retain their tag belts over Hasegawa & Itoh.

8/24—Budokan: Toyota defeats Kyoko Inoue to unify the IWA and All Pacific titles before a jam packed 15,560. Dynamite Kansai & Yumiko Hotta team up to upset Aja Kong & Akira Hokuto in a tag elimination match.

8/28—Korakuen Hall: In the finals of the annual Grand Prix tournament, Yumiko Hotta defeats Etsuko Mita while Manami Toyota beats tag partner Yamada in a tremendous 29 minute match. Both women gain spots at the Tokyo Dome tournament.

10/8—Korakuen Hall: Mita & Shimoda show why they are fast becoming one of wrestling's premier tag teams defeating Toyota & Takako Inoue in a great 24 minute four-and-a-half star bout.

10/9—Kawasaki: The annual Wrestlemarinpiad show draws 4,200 and the tag titles change hands in a five star spectacular as both Inoues team to defeat Toyota & Yamada. Bat Yoshinaga retires.

11/20—Tokyo Dome: 42,500 people paid over \$8 million dollars in one day with a \$6 million profit. Ten hours of some of the best wrestling ever on one card.

12/10—Korakuen Hall: The final night of the annual tag tournament has Toyota & Takako Inoue winning three matches, two of which are over Aja Kong and Reggie Bennett, to come from behind and claim the tourney championship. Kyoko Inoue and Hasegawa finish second.

#2 New Japan

(1991-#2, 1992-#2, 1993-#2)

The group founded by living legend Antonio Inoki seems to be destined to be a perennial runner-up. New Japan probably takes in more total revenue than any other wrestling promotion in the world. They do two Dome shows each year in Tokyo and Fukuoka each playing to a crowd of 50,000 or more. They do a whole string of other shows at arenas that seat in excess of 10,000 and usually sellout at very high ticket prices. They have a large and faithful group of hardcore followers who cannot get enough of the style.

For several years a sore spot was their weekly TV show getting preempted for golf or other specials. That problem was solved with their removal from prime time to the wee hours of the morning. It seems nobody wants to sponsor golf on the graveyard shift. So now they have a weekly hour show in a dependable, albeit less desirable slot.

Besides taking in truckloads of yen, the best move the group made all year was shining the spotlight on the junior heavyweight division. New Japan has a long history of an active junior division going back some 20 years and the start of Tatsumi Fujinami. However, even in the peak Sayama-Tiger Mask years, the smaller flyers still knew who was at the top of the card. In 1994 more attention was placed on the juniors as a group than at any time in the last 12 years.

Their roster in this division contains some amazingly talented athletes. In Jushin Liger and Chris Benoit (a/k/a Wild Pegasus), they have two of the world's best. In addition they have El

Samurai, Shinjiro Otani, Gran Hamada, Takayuki Iizuka, and Akira Nogami—all of whom are more than merely good. They have strong ties to many other promotions and can combine their core group with such outstanding wrestlers as The Great Sasuke, Super Delphin, Sato, and Hyabusa. Toward the end of the year they even combined with a AAA crew out of Mexico although the front office seems to have sabotaged this initial effort.

The best men's card of the year was the Apr. 16 Junior tournament held at the Tokyo Sumo Hall. The same group packed them in for several weeks with another tournament in May and June and even outdrew the heavyweights with their own tag tournament in October. When the spotlight shines on the smaller flyers, no group in the world can match New Japan.

But the New Japan roster has three parts to it and Liger and company make up only one of those. At the other extreme we have a group of veterans who once were the crowd drawing superstars who anchored the promotion a decade ago. Riki Choshu, Tatsumi Fujinami, Yoshiaki Fujiwara, and others once drew lots of money for the group. They are not ready to be put out to pasture and still insist on being put in prominent positions in the promotion. For most of the year, especially the first six months, there was simply too much emphasis on them and feuds with the Skinheads and WAR holdovers.

In the middle of the pack are wrestlers in their late-20s or early-30s who should be at or near the peak of their powers. Keiji Muto, Masa Chono, Shinya Hashimoto, Hiroshi Hase, and Kensuke Sasaki have all been elevated to championship status. But all still labor in the shadows of the Choshu-Fujinami-Fujiwara group. Choshu knows better than to deny them the center ring in championship bouts, but at the same time thinks nothing of shoving them out of the spotlight far too frequently.

They also use a variety of wrestlers who seem to flounder with no particular purpose or direction. This includes foreign imports like Scott Norton and Road Warrior Hawk and Japanese talent like Super Strong Machine, Hiro Saito, Tatsutoshi Goto, and Kengo Kimura. They fill out the lower part of the card and that's about it.

New Japan has a wonderful group of youngsters waiting in the wings more than ready to crack the big time. That talented group includes Kojima, Nakanishi, Niishimura, Yamamoto, and Ohara. Their main problem for the next few years is finding a rung on the promotional ladder to hang on to. Even a lower rung will have to do.

New Japan Calendar

1/4—Tokyo Dome: A super big payday as 62,000 pack the Big Egg and see history made as Genichiro Tenryu pins Antonio Inoki. Hulk Hogan demands a fortune and gets it to defeat Tatsumi Fujinami. Hawk &

Sasaki win the tag belts from Norton & Hercules.

2/5 & 2/6—Sapporo: Big crowds for the annual Ice Festival cards with 12,000 combining to see The Skin Heads defeat both WAR and New Japan teams four bouts to three on both nights.

2/17—Tokyo Sumo Hall: The first of many 11,500 sellouts for the year as Hashimoto pins Tenryu in a brutal match while the Steiners defeat Liger & Sasaki.

2/24—Budokan: Inoki announces his plans to retire before 14,214 and Hashimoto pins Jushin Liger in a special "Battle of the Champions" pitting the heavyweight belt against the junior title.

3/16—Tokyo Gym: Another big crowd of 9,200 witness a title change as Hiroshi Hase takes the WCW strap from Rick Rude. Saturo Sayama appears and announces he will make a limited comeback.

3/21—Nagoya: Hashimoto defeats Scott Norton and Liger beats Black Tiger in front of an 11,000 sellout.

3/24—Kyoto: New Japan continues land office business with 8,500 fans watching Rude taking back the title from Hase and Kojima winning the Young Lions Cup defeating Nakanishi.

4/4—Hiroshima: An upset of sorts has aging veteran Tatsumi Fujinami taking the IWGP Title from Shinya Hashimoto before 7,875 to set up the Fukuoka Dome main event.

4/16—Tokyo Sumo Hall: The best men's show of the year does SRO business as Jushin Liger stages a tournament open only to junior weight wrestlers. Chris Benoit emerges as the class of a 14 man field defeating The Great Sasuke in the finals of a five star effort.

5/1—Fukuoka Dome: 53,500 fans in the south of Japan see Hashimoto take back the IWGP belt from Fujinami while years of speculation turn to disappointment as Jushin Liger and an overweight Saturo Sayama wrestle a dull ten minute exhibition. Proving that age and power will always defeat youth and talent, Antonio Inoki defeats The Great Muta.

6/13—Osaka: Three weeks of the Best of the Super Junior Tournament matches concludes before 6,850 as Jushin Liger reclaims a top spot defeating Michinoku Pro wrestler Super Delphin.

7/8 & 7/9—Sapporo: Another combined crowd of 12,000 watches a mini-tournament to place wrestlers in the August G-1 Climax Tournament. Winners are Yoshiaki Yatsu, Takayuki Iizuka, Osamu Kido, and Shiro Koshinaka.

8/3-8/7—Tokyo Sumo Hall: For five straight nights, a sellout crowd of 11,500 watches successive rounds of the G-1 Climax Tournament. Masa Chono wins the tournament for the third time in four years defeating Kensuke Sasaki in the finals.

9/9—Kanazawa: Masa Chono makes his debut as a heel in a new outfit and ring persona busting open Hiroshi Hase in one of the year's most fluid juice jobs.

9/23—Yokohama: Hashimoto successfully defends the IWGP strap before 17,000 against Kensuke Sasaki. Inoki beats Wilhelm Ruska in a yawner.

9/24—Nagoya: Norio Honaga defeats Chris Benoit before 12,000 to win a hastily arranged tournament to fill the IWGP Jr. Title vacancy left by Liger's injury.

10/18—Okayama: Chris Benoit and Shinjiro Otani team up to win the first ever Junior division of the annual tag tournament defeating Great Sasuke and Black Tiger. The tournament does sellout business almost every night.

10/30—Tokyo Sumo Hall: The finals of the heavyweight division tag tourney are won by Muto & Hase defeating the constantly feuding team of SS Machine & Masa Chono before another 11,500.

11/25—Iwate: Muto & Hase continue to roll defeating Hawk & Sasaki to win the IWGP World Tag Titles. Honaga defeats Benoit to keep his Jr. Title.

21/11—Nagoya: The rich get even richer as Sabu jumps from FMW and hits the rings of New Japan moonsaulting Junji Hirata three times. Hardcores immediately begin to salivate over the prospect of Sabu vs. Liger later in the ring.

#3—All Japan

(1991-#1, 1992-#1, 1993-#3)

The positives cannot be denied. Of all the men's promotions in the world, this is the best managed. Giant Baba has a clear vision of what his product is and year after year follows it without any swerves, dodges, or alterations in course directions. Even Newt Gingrich would come across as a wild eyed liberal next to Baba's conservative mode of business operation.

They have the best men's main events in the world, especially on big cards when titles are at stake. Their Budokan shows rarely fail to produce a four-and-a-half star or better bout and it is always in the main event. In All Japan, the middle of the card workers know their place and role, never stealing the show.

Baba has a core group of talent which is without equal in any other men's promotion. Kenta Kobashi is arguably the best men's wrestler in the world. Toshiaki Kawada and Mitsuhara Misawa are not far behind. Two of their imports—Stan Hansen and Steve Williams—can look like top ten talents when placed under the main event spotlight.

All Japan continues to make lots of money and now have expanded to end almost every series with a big show at Tokyo Budokan Hall. Each show sells 16,300 tickets at very high prices and you nearly have to be at Budokan to buy a ticket to the next one before they sellout.

Those are the positives. The negatives are obvious and difficult to ignore. Their greatest strength—Baba's conservative booking style—has become their greatest weakness. All Japan, for all of its great main events, has become all too predictable and stale. Baba does not change for the sake of change but he does occasionally fine tune his product with a simple move or elevation of a wrestler. Change is not something Giant Baba welcomes and with the rest of Japan changing radically over the past five years, it just makes his promotion look more stodgy than ever.

While nearly every other group has embraced the concept of inter-promotional talent-sharing, Baba continues to isolate All Japan as an island unto itself. Despite the reality of wrestling excellence, many have the perception of an old-fashioned and out-of-date promotion.

They have a large group of aging undercard veterans who add nothing to the cards. When you attend an All Japan show, you do it in spite of the first four or five bouts. Unlike New Japan or AJW, they never sneak up and get in some surprises before intermission. They badly need to change the talent mix and introduce some fresh



Giant Baba

talent at nearly every level. But with the reality of only a 30 minute TV show, thrust upon them, the younger wrestlers and new faces get less exposure than ever before.

Toward the end of the year, Baba made some noises about having his champions make more title defenses in 1995. That would be a welcome step but it does not go nearly far enough in putting some renewed excitement back into the promotion.

All Japan Calendar

1/2—Korakuen Hall: Stan Hansen kicks off the year winning the annual Battle Royal over 18 other wrestlers.

1/29—Korakuen Hall: Climaxing a month-long tournament, Jun Akiyama pins Takao Omori to win the Asunaro Cup and a spot in the upcoming Carnival Tournament.

3/2—Kasugai: Jumbo Tsuruta returns for only the second time in a 20 minute six-man tag showing the effects of his long layoff.

3/5—Budokan: The first of the year's seven Budokan spectacles sees 16,300 watch a 35 minute tag match with youth being served as Misawa & Kobashi defeat Baba & Hansen. Misawa pins Baba making it his first clean job for a Japanese wrestler since Nov. '89.

3/21—Yamato: Just three nights into the prestigious Carnival Tournament, heavyweight champion Misawa drops out from an injury suffered at the hands of Doug Furnas.

3/29—Toyama: Before a crowd of 4,450 Kawada and Steve Williams battle to an excellent 30 minute draw.

4/10—Sendai: Kenta Kobashi finally pins Stan Hansen in a super 27 minute match and the crowd reacts like midnight on New Year's Eve.

4/11—Osaka: Lightning does indeed strike twice as Akira Taue follows in Kobashi's footsteps in pinning Hansen in another shocking Carnival tourney upset.

4/16—Budokan: The usual crowd sees a most

unusual result—Toshiaki Kawada is elevated to the most upper regions of the promotion winning the Carnival tourney with a win over Steve Williams in an excellent 26 minute bout.

5/18—Yokohama: An eight-man tag team elimination match has Kawada & Taue triumphant, plus Hansen & Williams & Ace beat Misawa & Kobashi & Kikuchi.

6/3—Budokan: Another automatic sellout has the pattern reverting back to form as Triple Crown champion Misawa pins Kawada in 36 plus minutes plus a mediocre undercard.

7/12—Kagoshima: Dan Kroffat pins Masa Fuchi to win the PWF Jr. Title.

7/17—Hakata: Hansen & Baba team to defeat Abdullah the Butcher & Kamala #2 at the annual Bruiser Brody Memorial Night card.

7/28—Budokan: 16,300 witness the changing of the guard with Steve Williams defeating Mitsuhara Misawa to capture the Triple Crown Title.

9/3—Budokan: Steve Williams successfully wins his first Triple Crown Title defense defeating Kenta Kobashi in a superior bout.

10/22—Budokan: Toshiaki Kawada pins champion Steve Williams to win the Triple Crown. Misawa & Hansen team for the first time to defeat Kobashi & Taue. An extra 200 squeeze in making it 16,500 fans.

11/25—Osaka: Misawa & Kobashi battle to a 30 minute draw in the Real World Tag Team Tournament against Taue & Kawada before 5,200.

12/10—Budokan: Finals of the tag tournament have Misawa & Kobashi winning for the second straight year triumphing over Williams & Acc. The veteran team of Baba & Hansen finishes second.

#4—UWF-International

(1991-#8, 1992-#5, 1993-#5)

The word "ring" usually conjures up an image of something circular shaped. However, in pro wrestling a ring is square. But it was not a circle or a square that dominated the UWFI in 1994. The key shape here was the triangle. Three men—Nobuhiko Takada, Vader, and Gary Albright took turns winning the big matches on their cards. While the formula was no surprise to anyone and will win no prize for creativity, it worked like a charm.

As the year went on, it seemed they could do no wrong racking up some of the biggest crowds on each and every show. In fact, no promotion in wrestling comes close to averaging the number of fans per show that the UWFI does. They practically owned Tokyo Budokan regularly cramming a sellout crowd of 16,500 into the place. Although they only promote a show every four to six weeks, a crowd of at least 15,000 for each show is one tremendous average.

Although he lost the group's title, Nobuhiko Takada is still their most important wrestler being a true national celebrity whose recognition goes well beyond traditional wrestling boundaries. Vader and Albright take turns playing the invading foreign monster who would despoil the purity of their Japanese art.

UWFI professes to be a strong style promotion and that it is. However, its actual style makes concessions to entertainment considerations unlike Maeda's RINGS. The result is wrestling

Zavisa's Top 25 Male Wrestlers

- 1) Kenta Kobashi (All Japan/1)
- 2) Chris Benoit (New Japan/4)
- 3) Toshiaki Kawada (All Japan/2)
- 4) The Great Sasuke (Michinoku/13)
- 5) Mitsuhiro Misawa (All Japan/7)
- 6) Hiroshi Hase (New Japan/3)
- 7) Steve Williams (All Japan/16)
- 8) Jushin Liger (New Japan/5)
- 9) Stan Hansen (All Japan/6)
- 10) Nobuhiko Takada (UWFI/9)
- 11) Black Tiger (New Japan/22)
- 12) Super Delphin (Michinoku/NR)
- 13) Masa Chono (New Japan/11)
- 14) Shinjiro Otani (New Japan/25)
- 15) Sabu (FMW/8)
- 16) Keiji Muto (New Japan/12)
- 17) Ginsei Shinzaki (Michinoku/NR)
- 18) Shiro Koshinaka (New Japan/NR)
- 19) Dan Kroffat (All Japan/14)
- 20) Vader (UWFI/NR)
- 21) El Samurai (New Japan/17)
- 22) Jun Akiyama (All Japan/18)
- 23) Tsoyoshi Kikuchi (All Japan/10)
- 24) Johnny Smith (All Japan/NR)
- 25) Hayabusa (Ezaki) (FMW/NR)

Ratings Analysis: A wrestler is judged only on his work in Japan. Wrestlers such as Sabu and Vader who work a great deal in the U.S. may actually rank much higher on a worldwide ranking because their U.S. work is so strong. This is especially true of Sabu who would rank in the world's top ten based on his U.S. work.

Based on a point system where the top rated (no. 1) wrestler gets 25 points, the #2 wrestler gets 24 points, and so on. Next to promotional affiliation is where a wrestler finished last year. Here are the evaluations for wrestlers by promotions:

New Japan: 9 wrestlers, 125 points
 All Japan: 9 wrestlers, 121 points
 Michinoku Pro: 3 wrestlers, 45 points
 UWFI: 2 wrestlers, 22 points
 FMW: 2 wrestlers, 12 points

that is both realistic and entertaining at the same time. It is a formula that both New Japan and All Japan have employed to a lesser degree over the years. In Japan, it is a formula for success.

They garnered a great deal of publicity in February and March with challenges issued to champions of five other promotions to participate in their upcoming heavyweight tournament. Of course, none of them accepted and their tournament had the usual UWFI line-up.

Toward year's end they received more publicity when the group's legitimate tough guy Yoji Anjo invaded the dojo of Rikson Gracie in America and challenged him to an impromptu match in front of the Japanese press. Gracie promptly wiped the floor with Anjo generating the kind of negative publicity that Anjo could never have foreseen.

To sustain success in the coming year, they do not need to deviate significantly from the pattern

of the last two years. They do need at least one fresh face to add to the championship mix. If the Gracie confrontation is but the first step in some future inter-promotional cooperation, it could be a goldmine. However, most speculation says if the Gracie's join hands with anyone, it would be Pancrase.

UWFI Calendar

2/25—Tokyo Budokan Hall: Takada teams with Naoki Sano to defeat Dan Severn & Gary Albright. Masahito Kakiyama beats Tamura Kiyoshi in the main event, Takada issues a challenge to Akira Maeda before a big crowd of 16,000.

4/3—Osaka Castle: 14,000 view the opening round of the group's tournament without any champions from rival promotions. Vader, Albright, and Takada are among the winners.

6/10—Budokan: 16,500 pack the place for the semi-finals with Vader over Tamura and Takada over Albright.

8/18—Budokan: Vader KO'd Takada in the tourney finals to win the title at 19:24 and gain revenge for his big loss in 1993.

10/8—Budokan: Albright teams with Kazuo Yamazaki to triumph over John Tenta and Vader. Takada defeats Russian grappler Victor Zangiev.

10/14—Osaka Castle: 14,000 witness Takada beating Naoki Sano and Tenta & Vader beating Yamazaki & Albright.

11/30—Budokan: Gary Albright defeats Nobuhiko Takada before 16,500.

#5—Frontier Martial Arts (1991-#4, 1993-#4, 1993-#4)

On May 5 at Kawasaki Stadium before 52,000 fans, Atsushi Onita lost a match to Genichiro Tenryu. It was one of those big barbed wire explosive bouts that only Onita seems to do. As a result of the loss, Onita announced his impending retirement from pro wrestling. The catch here is that Onita would take exactly one year before hanging up his boots and white tank top. In the meantime he gives new meaning to the Long Goodbye.

That singular event looms large like a heavy purple storm cloud over a dry prairie. It affected everything FMW did for the last seven months of the year and will affect everything they do for quite a while. When Onita does retire in May 1995, they could well be in for some very stormy weather.

FMW has been around for more than half a decade now. There are no longer any doubters wondering if Onita can make it on his own. The group has made Onita and Tarzan Goto wealthy men. If that is not enough, Onita has become a national celebrity as the master of the barbed wire who slices and dices his own flesh to appease his fans.

One of the many questions facing the group is how long FMW can survive without Onita as its centerpiece? Many are openly speculating that he will return well before the end of the year. That leads to yet another question—will the public accept that? Or will they view the entire 12 month Long Goodbye as a cheap fraud and turn their backs on Onita and FMW?

And in the meantime, before Onita plays like John Wayne, riding to rescue the wagon train from the marauding Indians, what does FMW build around? They added Mitsuhiro Matsunaga and Yukihiro Kanemura from WING but neither man is a "new Onita." It is also difficult to imagine centering everything around Tarzan Goto who is even more limited than Onita is without a tenth of his charisma. The only other reasonable prospect—American daredevil Sabu—appears to have departed for the greener and richer pastures of New Japan.

FMW never has sold quality wrestling in the manner of Japan's larger promotions. They have been the most successful of the niche promotions that offer an alternative product that only brushes the fringes of the traditional pro wrestling world. May 5, 1985 could well be the biggest day in FMW's history. But what happens on May 6 could be even more significant.

FMW Calendar

1/5 & 1/6—Tokyo Korakuen Hall: Antonio Pena and several stars from AAA in Mexico pay a visit to discuss sharing talent. Nothing comes from the attempt. Pogo pins Onita to win the World Brass Knuckles Title on the final night.

1/18—Misata: Over 3,000 see Big Titan and Gladiator defeat Onita and Niiyama to win the new Brass Knux tag titles climaxing a two week long tournament.

2/25—Korakuen: Megumi Kudo pins Leilani Kai to win a month long tourney for the Independent World Women's Championship.

3/17—Sapporo: Pogo retains the World Title pinning Onita in a no rope barbed wire death match and burns him with a large fireball.

4/17—Satte: Booker Tarzan Goto makes the returning Mitsuhiro Matsunaga work openers to prove his worth in FMW. Onita's team beats a Pogo team in a six-man tag bout.

4/21—Aomori: Nearly 4,400 look on as Pogo and Oya take the tag belts from Titan & Gladiator in 13:38. Goto makes up with Matsunaga after he intercepts a Pogo fireball meant for him.

5/5—Kawasaki: The largest FMW crowd in history—52,000—are stunned when Onita loses to Genichiro Tenryu in an exploding cage match. Onita announces his impending retirement from wrestling.

6/19—Korakuen: Combat Toyoda wins the women's crown pinning Megumi Kudo.

7/31—Yokohama: 5,625 see Onita and Matsunaga defeat Pogo and Oya to capture the tag titles in a Double Hell Death Match.

8/9 & 8/11—Russia: Three shows in Russia fail miserably with Russian star Grigory Veritchev pulling out and Onita no-showing for the first two nights.

8/28—Osaka: 15,382 fans see Yuki Nabeno upset Combat Toyoda and Onita defeats Aoyagi in a Double Hell Death Match.

9/7—Sapporo: Onita regains his Brass Knux Title pinning Pogo in another Double Hell Death Match before 5,880.

9/25—Tokyo Jingu Pool: In a match unique even by FMW standards, Onita & Gannosuke & Niiyama beat Pogo & Gladiator & Hosaki in a Double Hell Death Match in the middle of a swimming pool.

10/28—Korakuen: Mr. Pogo & Gladiator win the tag titles from Onita & Mr. Gannosuke.

11/1—Tokyo: A lavish party honors Onita's

1,000th stitch.

12/1—Hiroshima: 7,880 pack the Green Dome to see both Onita and Goto don paint and costume in a gimmick match defeating Pogo & Oya.

#6—WAR

(1991—#6, 1992—#7, 1993—#6)

Before he broke away from All Japan what now seems eons ago, Genichiro Tenryu may have been his nation's biggest star. In the intervening years, the promotion he calls home has changed its name, changed directions, split into two factions, and even changed its affiliations with other promotions. They have had their highs and lows, successes and failures. But through it all, the group has survived because it is firmly anchored around Tenryu.

Tenryu is not the superb worker he was in the late 1980s. There are few knowledgeable people who can point to any great bouts involving him over the past few years. But his popularity, his charisma, his legend survives. He endures. And years from now when people look back on Japanese wrestling in the decade of the '90s, that will be a story in itself.

Tenryu defeated both Antonio Inoki and Atsushi Onita in main events on two of the biggest shows of the year. His group survived in 1993 due to a good working relationship with New Japan. That tie was severed in 1994 but WAR kept trudging along. They were even able to stage successes at Sumo Hall despite lackluster cards.

By year's end however, rumors were strong that the end was near for WAR and Tenryu. His five year contract said to be worth \$600,000 per year is near its completion and it is doubtful if Tenryu is worth even half that on today's market. When it was called SWF, WAR had hopes of someday being the top group in Japan. Today, they would settle for staying in business the next twelve months.

WAR Calendar

1/5—Osaka: Ishinriki pins Ultimo Dragon to win the UWA Middleweight Title before 4,000.

1/16—Korakuen Hall: WING tag team Jado & Gedo show up as free agents but Tenryu destroys both at ringside.

2/24—Korakuen: WAR vs. Anti-WAR excites crowd with WAR taking three bouts to two.

3/2—Sumo Hall: Announced sellout of 11,000 see Koji Kitao destroy Ishinriki in a battle of former Sumos. FMW duo of Onita & Goto defeat Tenryu & Ashura Hara as Onita pins Tenryu to set up a big May 5 rematch with FMW.

3/26—Kumamoto: Ultimo Dragon is rushed to a local hospital after a chokeslam by Yamoto separates his shoulder.

4/27—Tokyo: Six night tour climaxes with more WAR vs. Anti-WAR feuds. Group is now totally separated from New Japan.

6/30—Sendai: A six-man tournament has Fuyuki & Jado & Gedo defeating Tenryu & Kitahara & Hamaguchi before 4,100.

7/17—Sumo Hall: Largest WAR crowd of the year—11,020—see another six-man tournament with Tenryu & Onita & Bigelow beating Hara & Tenta & Shinzaki.

9/1—Saku: The six-man belts are reclaimed by Fuyuki & Jado & Gedo taking them back from the U.S. trio of Bob Backlund & Warlord & Scott Putski who had won them just one week before.

12/4—Sumo Hall: Although they claim a sellout, only 8,000 tickets are sold to see Koji Kitao rewarded with years of professional loyalty to pro wrestling with a big win over Tenryu who suffers a broken shoulder during the match.

#7—Michinoku Pro (not previously listed)

In March 1993, The Great Sasuke opened his own wrestling promotion filled with younger workers who had their start with the former lucha oriented Universal promotion. They started in the far Northeastern part of Japan away from the bigger promotions. That allowed them to work small towns and they drew crowds between 200 and 400.

But of all the Japanese promotions on this Top Ten List, Michinoku made the most dramatic improvement in all aspects during the year. They ventured out of the safe confines of the Northeast and became something of a fan favorite in the Tokyo area. They had sellouts at Korakuen Hall establishing themselves as a "hot promotion."

When the All Japan Women promotion was rebuilding after the departures of the Crush Girls and Dump Matsumoto, they shrewdly worked for little or no money on almost any other promotion's show to gain a wider audience for their product. They were rewarded with legions of new fans who would not have otherwise been exposed to their style of wrestling. Sasuke and company have borrowed that idea to great success. They have appeared on many other promotions' larger shows, sometimes playing to record crowds. On Nov. 20, they were the only male wrestlers (other than the midgets) to work the big Tokyo Dome show and had an entertaining lucha style match.

Sasuke became a major star as a result of the Apr. 16 New Japan Junior tournament. Although he lost to Chris Benoit in the finals, he became a major player with his tremendous in-ring performance. Other Michinoku participants—Super Delphin, Sato, and Taka Michinoku also had the opportunity to strut their stuff and did so admirably. With their inclusion in later New Japan cards, they were fast developing a much wider fan base taking fans from WAR, New Japan, and FMW.

Their Oct. 30 card pitting Sasuke against FMW legend Onita was a big success with 5,667 tickets sold. They have taken the lucha style, blended it with New Japan junior style and created an entertaining and crowd pleasing format. In 1995, the trick will be in converting all that attention into bankable profits. Right now they may be the best financially strapped group in Japan.

Michinoku Pro Calendar

1/14—Sapporo: The group leaves their usual small town territory and plays before 2,540. This will set a pattern for success that is followed for the rest of the

year. FMW star Sabu appears on the show.

2/24—Korakuen Hall: Their first Korakuen card is a huge success even selling out the standing room areas. Unfortunately, a ticket seller walks off with the money and the success does not translate into profit. Sasuke leads a team over a Delphin team in a six-man.

3/26—Osato: Shiryō defeats Taka Michinoku to win a tournament and a title shot against Super Delphin.

3/31—Noshiro: Sasuke and Shinzaki battle to a great 22 minute draw with both KO'd at the finish. Many feel it was this bout that put the group on the map.

4/29: Tokyo Ward Gym: Sasuke and Shinzaki go at it again with even greater success. A four and three quarter star bout before 4,800 with Shinzaki pinning Sasuke.

6/16—Obanazawa: Ricky Fuji pins Terry Boy to become the first North American champion recognized by the group.

7/10—Tokyo: A bump on the road to success as both Delphin and Shinzaki no show and Sasuke fails to wrestle, thus angering Tokyo hardcore.

8/28—Kitakami: Group finishes its longest tour ever, 33 shows in one month, with Sato turning on his tag partner, The Great Sasuke, causing them to lose.

9/29—Aomori: Sasuke's scheduled main event against Jushin Liger is aborted and instead he faces

Top 25 Crowds of the Year

These are the largest attended wrestling shows in Japan for the year. Where possible, official figures are used. Some promotions in Japan, just as in other countries, pad their figures for public relations purposes. We have attempted to make adjustments for actual attendance.

1. 62,000—1/4, New Japan, Tokyo Dome
2. 53,500—5/1, New Japan, Fukuoka Dome
3. 52,000—5/5, FMW, Kawasaki Stadium
4. 42,500—11/20, AJWomen, Tokyo Dome
5. 17,000—9/23, New Japan, Yokohama
6. 16,500—6/10, UWFI, Tokyo Budokan
16,500—8/18, UWFI, Tokyo Budokan
16,500—9/3, All Japan, Tokyo Budokan
16,500—10/8, UWFI, Tokyo Budokan
16,500—11/30, UWFI, Tokyo Budokan
11. 16,300—3/5, All Japan, Tokyo Budokan
16,300—4/16, All Japan, Tokyo Budokan
16,300—6/3, All Japan, Tokyo Budokan
16,300—7/28, All Japan, Tokyo Budokan
16,300—10/22, All Japan, Tokyo Budokan
16,300—12/10, All Japan, Tokyo Budokan
17. 16,000—2/25, UWFI, Budokan
16,000—3/27, AJWomen, Yokohama
19. 15,560—8/24, AJWomen, Tokyo Budokan
20. 15,382—8/28, FMW, Osaka
21. 15,000—5/6, UWFI, Tokyo Budokan
22. 14,214—2/24, New Japan, Tokyo Budokan
23. 14,000—4/3, UWFI, Osaka
14,000—10/14, UWFI, Osaka
25. 12,000—9/27, New Japan, Osaka

New Japan: 5 shows on the list, 3 in the top ten.

UWFI: 8 shows on the list, 4 in the top ten.

All Japan: 7 shows on the list, 1 in the top ten.

All Japan Women: 3 shows on the list, 1 in the top ten.

FMW: 2 shows on the list, 1 in the top ten.

In 1993, the cut-off for the top 25 was 11,500.

In 1992, the cut-off for the top 25 was 10,510.

Zavisa's Top 25 Female Wrestlers

1. Manami Toyota (AJW/1)
2. Kyoko Inoue (AJW/3)
3. Akira Hokuto (AJW/2)
4. Toshiyo Yamada (AJW/5)
5. Aja Kong (AJW/16)
6. Mima Shimoda (AJW/13)
7. Mariko Yoshida (AJW/NR)
8. Yumiko Hotta (AJW/15)
9. Hikari Fukuoka (JWP/9)
10. Mayumi Ozaki (JWP/7)
11. Takkako Inoue (AJW/11)
12. Sakie Hasegawa (AJW/8)
13. Etsuko Mita (AJW/18)
14. Suzuka Minami (AJW/10)
15. Devil Masami (JWP/4)
16. Dynamite Kansai (JWP/12)
17. Bull Nakano (AJW/6)
18. Shinobu Kandori (LLPW/14)
19. Rumi Kazama (LLPW/14)
20. Chapparita Asari (AJW/24)
21. Megumi Kudo (FMW/NR)
22. Chigusa Nagayo (Gaea/NR)
23. Kauro Ito (AJW/20)
24. Tomoko Watanabe (AJW/NR)
25. Cutie Suzuki (JWP/23)

Ratings based on a point system where the top rated wrestler gets 25 points, the no. 2 wrestler gets 24 points, and so on. Here is a promotional break-down...

AJW: 16 wrestlers, 246 points
JWP: 5 wrestlers, 55 points
LLPW: 2 wrestlers, 15 points
FMW: 1 wrestler, 5 points
Gaea: 1 wrestler, 4 points

Shinjiro Otani and triumphs. Super Delphin defeats El Samurai.

10/30—Iwate: The group's biggest success has 5,667 watch as Atsushi Onita defeats Sasuke in the usual FMW pyrotechnics spectacular death match.

11/13: Yamagata: Shinzaki & Delphin win the first tag tournament defeating Naniwa & Taka Michinoku in the finals.

#8—RINGS

(1991—#5; 1992—#6; 1993—#7)

Akira Maeda continues to survive the way a car with an empty gas tank chugs along seemingly only on fumes. He is the only name star in the promotion. Of course, he is the only one being paid any real money so that is both a liability and an asset. For the third straight year, RINGS continued to slide ever downward. Their attendance is good enough to keep Maeda in business, but their glory days of packed arenas and 24 hour sellouts are but fading memories.

The quality of RINGS was never lower than in 1994. Besides Maeda, there are a few Japanese hopefuls that want to inherit Maeda's mantle. As of yet, none have developed into stars that can draw money. The bulk of the promotion is made up of Europeans from a variety of martial arts backgrounds who provide fodder for Maeda's next star turn.

Maeda does make money with this stripped down operation but continues to suffer many

embarrassments. On Jan. 21 they sold 11,000 tickets for their Budokan show but there were also 5,000 empty seats that got the critics attention. On Mar. 19 they played to less than 50 percent capacity at Yokohama Arena selling 8,156 tickets in an arena that holds 17,000.

Maeda seems to have knuckled under to the success of the UWFI and no longer even makes any pretense of working bouts which are exciting or entertaining. Pancrase and Masa Funaki are now the new rage among the young shooting maniacs and Maeda seems strangely content promoting a style that pretends to fool no one.

Expect more of the same in 1995. More Maeda on top, more Europeans on the bottom, and more sliding down that hill.

RINGS Calendar

1/21—Budokan: One of their biggest crowds of the year—11,036—watches the Tournament Grand Finals with Maeda winning over Bitsadze Tirial of Russia in an uneventful nine minutes.

2/6—Korakuen Hall: A lackluster show fails to sellout the once automatic building in what used to be called "Shooting Maniacs Heaven."

3/3—Tokyo: Maeda responds to the challenge issued by UWFI and Nobuhiko Takada saying he will wrestle him but only in RINGS.

3/19—Yokohama: Maeda over Andrei Kopilov as the UWFI feud fails to materialize.

4/23—Hiroshima: Maeda defeats Pieter Oele of Holland and another dull show.

5/17—Sendai: A healthy crowd of nearly 5,000 is treated to a bout that goes just 2:38 with Maeda putting himself over the man with the most charisma in the group—Willy Williams. No effort is made to make it work as an entertaining main event.

6/18—Ariake: Over 9,000 see Maeda defeat Volk Han in a long 18 minute bout proving that as long as Maeda is there, there is an audience for his product.

7/14—Osaka: After Dick Vrij loses to Maeda, they work what looks like a typical pro wrestling angle with Vrij attacking Maeda and a huge pull-apart brawl ensues.

8/20—Yokohama: Maeda pins Russian Tskhadadze Zaouri.

8/27—Russia: Maeda uses several name Russian stars to draw a crowd of 7,000.

9/21—First round of the annual tournament plus Maeda suffers a rare loss to Dick Vrij in the main event.

11/19: Tokyo: Over 8,000 see Maeda win a tournament bout advancing to the semi-finals. Entire show lasts only two hours.

12/16—Nagoya: Maeda faces youngster Yoshihisa Yamamoto and has the opportunity to create a new star, however Maeda defeats Yamamoto to gain a spot in the finals against Volk Han who defeats Hans Nyman. Just over 7,000 fans attend in a building which seats 11,000.

#9—JWP

(1991—#10; 1992—#10; 1993—#8)

On May 22, JWP had its biggest success ever, selling 10,000 tickets and packing Ariake Coliseum for a series of interpromotional bouts against the All Japan Women. They sold out many Korakuen Hall shows as well and did not fare badly on the road away from Tokyo. On Sept. 18 they managed 3,900 in Yokohama.

JWP survives because of their connection with the highly successful All Japan Women group. They have a core of decent to good workers who

usually put on a show of five to six bouts each running in the 20 to 25 minute range. In addition to more established stars like Devil Masami, Dynamite Kansai, and Mayami Ozaki, they have a true rising star in Hikari Fukuoka. One day should she could well carry the promotion. They also have one of the best newcomers in the business in Candy Okutsu.

JWP Calendar

1/9—Korakuen Hall: A sellout crowd starts out the year with an excellent three count vs. two count handicap match. Veterans Chigusa Nagayo, Devil Masami, and Dynamite Kansai triumph over Plum Mariko, Cutie Suzuki, and Mayami Ozaki.

2/11—Korakuen: Another sellout sees Kansai & Ozaki beat Masami & Okutsu.

4/10—Korakuen: Devil Masami puts on her monster heel outfit and defeats another legend Chigusa Nagayo before another sellout crowd.

5/22—Tokyo: JWP goes up against the All Japan Women and comes away with a huge payday before 10,700 fans. Aja Kong beats Dynamite Kansai while Cutie Suzuki defeats Takako Inoue in a Battle of the Beauties.

8/8—Tokyo Gym: Devil Masami pins Dynamite Kansai and Ozaki defeats Suzuki before 3,800.

9/18—Yokohama: The JWP Title changes hands with Masami defeating Kansai in 24:10 before 3,900 fans.

10/20—Sapporo: Commando Borshoi pulls the single biggest upset of the entire year by pinning Chigusa Nagayo in just 29 seconds. Masami pins Hikari Fukuoka.

11/27—Tokyo Theatre: A packed theater house of 1,650 sees Ozaki & Fukuoka beat Suzuki & Okutsu and thus gain an upcoming title shot against the AJW duo of Mita & Shimoda.

12/4—Korakuen: Kauro Maeda & Hikari Fukuoka upset Kansai & Suzuki before another sellout of 2,000 fans.

#10—Independent Wrestling Alliance (new promotion)

Although the ownership is different, the IWA is for all practical purposes the latest incarnation of WING. Early in 1994, moneymen Mickey Ibaragi pulled out of the group and the company closed up shop. Victor Quinones found a new financial godfather and debuted as the IWA on May 21 with a crew made up of WING veterans and some younger Japanese talent from smaller fringe promotions. Quinones has shelved his heel manager persona in favor of acting as the group's promoter.

In 1994, FMW stole away much of what used to be WING talent. Matsunaga and Kanemura both departed for FMW leaving Quinones searching for native talent to replace them. He came up with Nobutaka Araya and Hiroshi Ono and has done well with them. In addition to Quinones favorites, The Head Hunters, he has added legendary giant Terry Funk who started on the November tour. Cactus Jack will start with the group in January rounding out a fairly solid base of talent.

The challenge facing IWA is to find a comfortable style that everyone can work in without risking death or dismemberment every time they enter the ring. After all, you can only

A Glimpse at the Japanese Culture

By Chris Zavis, Torch Columnist

After spending only six days in Japan last fall, I do not qualify as an expert on Japan or Japanese life. But I did find that the Japanese culture parallels the Japan wrestling industry in several ways.

Much has been written about the "miracle of Japan." It is puzzling to many that a nation the size of California with half of the population of the United States and not many natural resources could evolve from near decimation to world economic superpower in just 50 years. One key ingredient to solving this puzzle seems to be in the way Japan functions as a society. Consider the lesson of the following string of experiences.

My visit was coordinated with that of Dave Meltzer of Wrestling Observer fame. I flew in from Detroit while he left from California but we were fortunate to have our flights land within five minutes of each other. My plane landed at Narita Airport. I went through customs and made my way to the baggage claim. Dave was already there waiting for me with his luggage. Within one or two minutes my luggage arrived and we were on our way to Korakuen Hall to see an IWA show. Contrast this with my return to Detroit where I waited for over 45 minutes next to the luggage conveyor belt before getting my bags.

Days later we took the shinkansen bullet train from Tokyo to Hiroshima to see the AAA/New Japan card. The train was to leave the station at 11:04 a.m. Above the doors leading from one car to another is a digital readout giving you information that ranges from the time of day to the train's speed or distance from the next station. I happened to be looking at it when the time switched from 11:03 to 11:04. At that precise second, the train began to move. This did not happen at 11:03:59 or even 11:04:01, but smack dab at 11:04 as that number changed.

All five cards we attended started exactly on time. The evening shows begin at 6:30 p.m. partly to get the workers home in time to be ready for a full day of work the next day. When we went from Narita to Korakuen Hall, we arrived at about 6:45 p.m. The first match was already over. The Tokyo Dome All Japan Women's spectacular announced a 2 p.m. starting time. Right at the appointed hour the music began and the show started.

How many cards have you attended in the United States where the

announced start time was merely an approximation? This is especially true of independent shows which often don't start until 15 or 20 minutes later and "15 minute intermissions" drone on for more than a half hour.

Another experience totally outside of wrestling provided some insight into the Japanese concept of customer service. On my last morning in Japan, I took the train downtown to buy gifts for my family. By sheer luck, I quickly located a small shop I had noticed five days before and saw what I wanted right there in the display window. The posted hours said the shop opened at 10 a.m. and it was then about 9:45. I noticed a clerk vacuuming in the shop and decided to wait the 15 minutes not trusting my navigational skills to ever get me back there a second time.

Two or three minutes passed when the door opened and the clerk asked me if I wanted to shop. He ushered me into the store and I showed him what I wanted. He asked if it was a present, motioned me to sit down, and he disappeared down a staircase. Five minutes later after leaving me alone in his unguarded shop, he returned with the item gift wrapped. When I left the store, it was not yet 10 a.m. How many times have you stood outside a store in this country just one or two minutes before the posted opening hour only to have your blood boil as some clerk repeatedly checked their watch not wanting you to enter even one second too soon? Or how about the feeling you get when you show them your watch that is past the opening minute, but they give you a condescending look telling you the clock says otherwise. The difference is called customer service.

The high points of the wrestling portion of my trip came in viewing the superb Nov. 20 All Japan Women's Tokyo Dome show. Of the nineteen pro wrestling style bouts, seven were in the three star range while another seven were above four stars. The best live match I have ever seen and my choice for the best match of all 1994 occurred on this show. For a day of quality wrestling this would be difficult to top.

But Japan has more to offer than just what occurs in the fabled squared circle. I wanted to see more than wrestling matches. On the morning of the 19th, we were in Hiroshima having seen the New Japan/AAA show the night before. I awakened early and visited the Hiroshima Peace Park, a 15 minute walk from the hotel.

In August 1945, the United States and Japan were winding up 45 long and deadly months of war waged by each against the other. It had started with the Dec. 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii by the Japanese. On Aug. 6, 1945, a U.S. Air Force airplane dropped a single atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima. The plane was the Enola Gay—the bomb nicknamed the Fat Boy—and it would be a long time before the people of the world would know the following details.

When the bomb exploded, a fireball nearly 400 feet wide formed in the air over the city. At its center, the air temperature reached 300,000 degrees

jump out of balconies so many times before it becomes run of the mill. Quinones rivals Onita in coming up with innovative ways to use barbed wire but they have a tendency to overdo it as they did in November with a barbed wire chain death match in the middle of a card.

Eventually you must go back to wrestling. How well IWA does wrestling will largely determine the extent of their longevity.

IWA Calendar

5/21—Yokosuka: Over 2,000 fans welcome the IWA debut show and Yukihiko Kanemura & Nobutaka Araya emerge as rising stars.

6/23—Korakuen: Yukihiko Kanemura steals the show in a packed hall pinning Nakamiki in a chain death barbed wire match. Korakuen fans lead chant of "WING, WING."

7/20—Iwadotown: Dick Slater pins Araya to become the first IWA Heavyweight Champion.

8/29—Korakuen: Korakuen is packed to see Nobutaka Araya become the second man to dive from

the high balcony and just like Matsunaga's suicidal first one, the Head Hunters are there to catch him.

9/18—Korakuen: One of the Head Hunters moonsaults Johnny Gomez sandwiching him between two layers of barbed wire.

10/16—Korakuen: Another sellout crowd sees Head Hunters defeat Ono and Nakamiki in a bout with the ring surrounded by glass.

11/16—Korakuen: Terry Funk's first tour has him in an excellent bout teaming with Araya to defeat The Head Hunters in a barbed wire death match with blood flowing like sake from a busted bottle.

PANCRASE

The Pancrase promotion, which formed in 1993, is not listed among my Top Ten because they do not consider themselves a professional wrestling promotion. Pancrase claims to have athletic contests which are legitimate and not worked. When you view their bouts, it is difficult to prove otherwise. They are extremely popular with the younger male audience and had many

resounding successes in 1994. Although they are not a traditional pro wrestling group, here are some of their accomplishments for the year.

Pancrase Calendar

1/19—Yokohama: 5,645 watch Minoru Suzuki defeat (Ken) Wayne Shamrock while Masa Fuyuki triumphs over Bas Rutten. Big success in a hard to sellout building.

3/13—Nagoya: 3,750 watch five bouts that last a total of 22 minutes.

4/21—Osaka Gym: Nearly 6,000 fans watch Masa Funaki defeat Yusuke Fuke in seven minutes plus two surprising 30 minute time limit draws.

5/31—Tokyo Budokan: Suzuki defeats Maurice Smith and Funaki beats Gregory Smith before 11,000.

7/26—Tokyo Gym: Shamrock defeats Bas Rutten before 4,124.

9/1—Osaka: Masa Funaki beats Shamrock in a quick 2:30.

10/15—Tokyo Sumo Hall: 10,500 fans see Funaki beat Suzuki in just 1:51. Four of the five bouts total less than ten minutes of action.

Celsius for 1/10,000 of a second. Fifty meters away, temps cooled to only 10,000 degrees Celsius. On the ground the heat reached 6,000 degrees. Virtually every structure not made of steel enforced concrete was instantly destroyed. What the blast did not take, raging fires did. Over 140,000 people died either in the initial blast, subsequent fires, or as a result of radiation poisoning from the two hours of "black rain" which soaked the survivors with radioactive ash.

As the city of Hiroshima struggled to rebuild from heaps of rubble and ash, a collective decision was made. They would make their city the center of a movement dedicated to preserving world peace. The building of a Peace Park in the heart of what used to be the city, would be the starting point of that dedication.

The Hiroshima Peace Park in a gorgeous expanse of sculpted landscape sitting between two rivers. The contrast between the gently flowing pastoral ground and the rising steel and glass city around it is striking. Placed discreetly throughout the park are many statues, monuments, and memorials which commemorate some particular aspect of the atomic bomb and its aftermath.

During most of the day it is a beehive of activity with hundreds of school children and tourists moving from place to place. At seven in the morning, the only other people there besides myself were two joggers and a cleaning crew of three pushing a cart that could have come right out of the 18th century.

More than any other experience, seeing the Children's Peace Monument had the biggest impact on me.

In October 1955, a junior high student names Sadako Sasaki died of leukemia, then called "A-Bomb disease." In the Hiroshima Red Cross Hospital, she was not the first to die and she would not be the last. Sasaki captured both the hearts and the imagination of the Japanese public with her valiant struggle to construct 1,000 paper cranes. She had been told that if she could fold 1,000 cranes of paper, her disease would be cured.

In 1955, Japan was still struggling and paper, like many other goods, was in short supply. She started out using the paper that wrapped her daily medicines. A plaque in the Peace Museum says she actually exceeded her goal. Popular legend has it that she fell about 30 cranes short of her goal. Regardless, she died.

A book was written about her and teachers all over the world still use it with their students. I remember both of my children bringing it home in the elementary grades.

The Children's Peace Monument was unveiled on May 5, 1958. It was built with donations from school children from ten different nations. It is a bell-shaped metal structure nine meters high. High atop it stands a statue of a girl and a crane. As you approach it from a distance, it looks like two

extremely colorful hedges of flowers flow outward in half circles from each side of the monument.

As you get closer, the flowered hedges vanish and now evolve into rainbows of paper streamers placed in heaping piles. It is only on getting right next to them that you see what they actually are. For a distance of 40 to 50 feet, perhaps three feet high and another three feet thick are tens of thousands of small paper cranes. Many are connected in a chain-like design which causes them to look like water flowing over rocks. Amid the cranes are handwritten signs proclaiming their origins. "Mrs. Ruta's Fifth Grade Class—Berlin, Germany, "Mr. Jensen's 8th Grade Class—Seattle, Washington," "Patients of Ward 15, Paris Red Cross Hospital."

Most of the cranes are smaller than an average finger. Each was made by a person touched by the story of Sadako Sasaki. Together they have an emotional impact that is massive and overpowering. The only other architectural structure that I can compare it to is the Viet Nam Veterans wall in Washington D.C. But the wall, for all of its impact and power, does not have the sweetness or beauty that the cranes possess.

If you can walk away from the Children's Peace Monument with a dry eye, well, you are made of sterner stuff than I am. But then I have been known to get misty eyed over sappy 30 second TV commercials so maybe I am making too much of a few colored pieces of paper.

At nine in the morning, the Peace Museum opens and I made that the last thing I saw there. The contents are too vast and powerful to describe here. If you are ever in Japan, visit it and see for yourself. As you leave they have a gift shop. I really did not expect to find silver crane earrings, or atomic bomb 500 piece puzzles, or tiny Hiroshima's under a glass bubble which rains back ash when shaken upside down. They have none of those items or nothing that even comes close. The only thing sold at the Peace Museum gift shop is information. Books, postcards, items that convey the story of what happened there. Anything else would trivialize the experience.

There are times in your life when something happens to you that borders on the surreal. Events which seem out of sync with reality and when you think back on them cause you to question if they happened at all. As I returned to my hotel, the most unusual thing happened.

A lone bicycle rider approached me from the next block. As the distance shortened between us it became obvious the rider was somehow different. As our paths intersected that difference was difficult to ignore. He was a man in his late 40s or early 50s. One entire side of his face and head was distended as if a grapefruit had been carefully surgically inserted under his skin. Protruding from that were several dark bumps.

Chris Zavisa, besides writing a monthly column on the Japan wrestling scene for Pro Wrestling Torch, is a full-time high school history teacher.

12/16 & 12/17: Sumo Hall: The young group takes a big chance promoting a two night King of Pancrase tournament. They sell 21,500 of 22,000 combined seats as Shamrock comes back from earlier losses to defeat Manabutu Yamada in the finals.

MINOR PROMOTIONS

There are at least a dozen more wrestling promotions in Japan outside of the Top Ten. Already, four more have announced start-up dates in 1995. Here are some of the more notable happenings in the smaller groups in 1994...

1/15—Seishen, Tokyo Korakuen Hall: 1,950 see former New Japan worker Masa Aoyagi KO Hiroshi Itakura.

1/21—World Martial Arts Wrestling, Korakuen: 2,100 see wrestling's bad boy Koji Kitao return with his own promotion defeat Koki Kitahara of WAR. Critics rate it a poor show.

1/27—Pro Wrestling Crusaders, Korakuen: The struggling group can muster only 1,231 fans in wrestling's easiest building despite an "Incredible Death Match" with a bed of nails and barbed wire.

2/17—Pro Wrestling Crusaders, Korakuen: First Anniversary card draws only 1,090 for a lackluster six man card.

3/8—FULL, Korakuen: Headlining with Los Brazos, the lucha based group that used to sell out Korakuen sells only 1,038 tickets.

3/11—New Stage Battle, Korakuen: Masashi Aoyagi returns with Saturo Sayama who acts as a second for his trainee Yuki Nanai who wins a mixed match.

4/23—Kawasaki City Gym: Many of the smaller promotions come together to do a benefit for a 26 year old rookie Toshimitsu Naoi who died on Jan. 8. Good crowd of 2,300.

5/7-5/11—WWF, Titan books four cities to only 50 percent capacity and poor bouts with highly negative reviews.

7/7—SPWF, Korakuen: First Anniversary show draws 1,812 for Yatsu defeating Takagi.

7/14—LLPW, Tokyo: 8,300 see Bull Nakano defeat Shinobu Kandori in a bloody chain match plus Harley Saito & Noriyo Tateno upset the Inoues.

8/1—Union, Korakuen: Sellout crowd sees Goro

Tsurumi & Masahiko Takasugi beat The Mummy Brothers to win the tag titles.

8/13—Fujiwara Family, Korakuen: A gender-blender mixed tag as Joe Malenko & Shinobu Kandori defeat Yoshiaki Fujiwara & Thunder Cracky.

9/27—LLPW, Osaka: Eagle Sawai pins Norio Tateno to win her group's spot in the women's tournament at the Nov. 20 Tokyo Dome show.

10/2—Independent Alliance, Yokohama: Goro Tsurumi sells 350 tickets for a show at a place named (and this is no joke), Young Dong.

11/27—Social Pro Wrestling, Osaka: A poor crowd of only 485 is evidence of the falling fortunes of the fringe promotions. Isao Takagi defeats Yatsu in the main event.

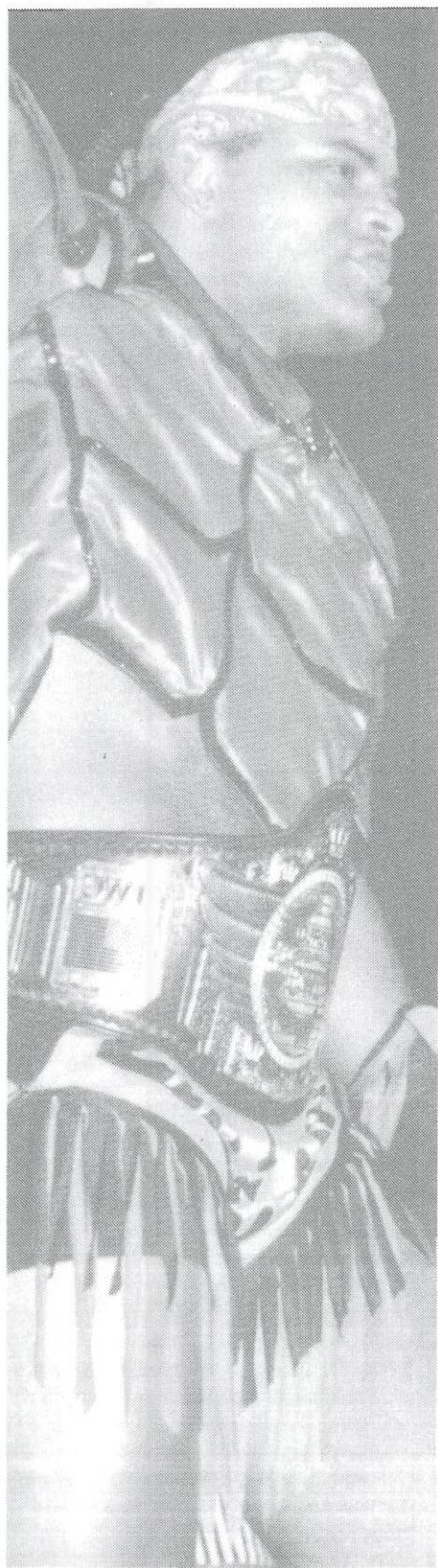
12/7—Tokyo Pro Wrestling, Kanazawa: New group using the old standbys Goro Tsurumi, Isamu Teranishi, and Takashi Ishizawa debuts to just under 1,000.

12/10—WING: Promoter Mickey Ibaragi announces that WING will make a return to pro wrestling in late March with Jason the Terrible as its centerpiece.

TORCH TALK SPECIAL

KONNAN

By Wade Keller



Konnan—real name Carlos Espada—has risen in the last few years to become the top paid and most well-known star in Mexico. No doubt most fans, though, in the United States don't know who he is. If they do know him, it's from his appearance on the November 1994 AAA/IWC pay-per-view. He hopes that changes some day as he aspires to be a well-known Hispanic role model in the United States.

Konnan has been a prime player in a revolution of sorts in Mexico over the past few years. He and the late Love Machine have been the two most influential American wrestlers in Mexico. In the following extensive "Torch Talk" with Konnan conducted Aug. 21, 1994, he talks in detail about his rise from life on the streets surrounded by drug dealing, dealing with racism in the Navy, battling for a break in the United States, and eventually his ascension to the top in Mexico. More than just a wrestler, he is a student of the industry and his open observations and outspoken opinions on his years in the sport lend a rarely captured insight on a sport that is tough to comprehend.

Keller: How did you originally discover that pro wrestling even existed?

Konnan: I grew up in Miami, Florida being the son of Cuban parents. My father is Puerto Rican and my mother is Cuban; she exiled from Cuba around 1960. While living in Miami on Channel 6 over there you would see wrestling at 12 o'clock every Saturday and every kid watched it. Back then it was Dusty Rhodes, Eddie and Mike Graham, Jack Brisco, Abdullah the Butcher, Ernie Ladd, the Funk Brothers. Because my family spoke Spanish, on the cable we had a channel 23 so we would catch everything from the Olympic and that's how I got to see people like Goliath and Gordman, Mil Mascaras, Raul Mada. I got to see two different styles of wrestling. I was just in love with it. Every kid in

school would go wrestle on the playground and I was just a big fan of it.

Keller: How did you eventually get involved in wrestling?

Konnan: Consequently I think a lot of us outgrow wrestling and either come back to it or stay away. I was one who outgrew it for a while and came back to it. I think like in 1984 when the WWF was all over the place, mainstream MTV, NBC, I saw Macho Man who I thought was the most extravagant guy I've ever seen. And I loved The Islanders and the feud they had at that time with Strike Force. I never really liked Hogan that much. I'm not sure why. I kind of liked him when I saw him in the Rocky film because we always thought Sylvester Stallone was a big, tough guy. Standing next to Hogan he seemed almost anemic. I started to watch it a little bit and I kind of became a casual fan. I guess I'm more of your typical fan. I think your typical fan just watches it on TV. I watched it every Saturday and followed the storylines and liked it. Around '88, I believe, I used to be a boxer in the United States Navy and I had dislocated my shoulder getting ready for the Olympic trials because my father used to be a boxer, also. I was going through rehabilitation on my shoulder and I was in the gym and I started to see all these bodybuilders in there. Of course the roid rage was very big in California at that time. I knew nothing of roids. I started to work out and started to get bigger and I started to notice that in boxing my appetite and my hunger just wasn't there. The snap in my jab just wasn't there. So I wanted to get into bodybuilding.

One day I was playing basketball in a park in San Diego, California which is on the border of Tijuana, Mexico and I got into an altercation with another guy. This guy that was walking his dog saw me, his name is John Roberts, and he said, "Hey, for your muscularity, you're pretty agile and pretty good with your hands." I said, "I used

to be a boxer." He said, "Why don't you come to Mexico because they have very good wrestling there and I think you could become a star. I said, "F--- Mexicans." I had a really ignorant view toward Mexicans. I think the United States on a whole has an ignorant view of them due to the movies, due to the fact that we look at them as tomato pickers and gang members. We don't really have any positive Mexican role models.

Now they are starting to get into studying great Black American leaders in American schools, but how about Indians who were here before they were or other Latins or Asians that helped build this country. But the history books are written by the winners, so what can you say?

So anyway, my view was very ignorant, plus I'm Cuban. Cubans, basically on the Hispanic chart, if you put Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Dominicans, we are usually the highest educated and the better paid for the simple fact that most Cubans were political refugees not economic refugees so you had doctors and lawyers coming to Miami whereas from Mexico and Puerto Rico you've got the lower echelon in everything.

So I always looked down at Mexicans. He tried to convince me, but I said "f--- Mexico." Then he told me something that really changed my way of thinking. He said, "You told me you were a boxer? What do you think of Julio Ceasar Chavez?" I said, "That guy's awesome." "What about Salvadore Sanchez?" "He's great." He said, "Well, the wrestling's just the same. In fact, it's even better." I've always prided myself on not closing my mind and not being ignorant on something I've never seen or tried. So we went there. You can imagine, here I was, 23 years old, I had grown up on American wrestling, and all of a sudden I see up in the ring guys with cool looking masks, I see these guys flipping through the ropes and over the ropes, backflips, freefalls, brutal brawling. I was like, "What in the hell is this!" It was probably like the first time you saw it. I couldn't sleep that whole night. The next night I went in there and I told them I wanted to be a wrestler.

This was about six years ago. I only had four months of formal training, which is obviously way, way, way too little. But they were just at that time so impressed by my size because I was so big that they just said we have to stick this guy in there somewhere. They just saw that I had a lot of enthusiasm, which I guess in the ring could equate to charisma which we all know is a valuable asset for any star.

Keller: What promotion did you start with?

Konnan: I started with a local promoter, Benjamin Mora. He had an association known as WWA. He was always very condescending toward me. He always did what a lot of wrestlers fall into. Even Sabu has fallen into this—and I'll tell you about him in a minute—where, "I started you, so you owe me." When

you first start you are very humble, very noble. You think, "Well, yeah, this guy did start me." He would always pay me bad, treat me how he wanted, humiliate me in front of the boys. I was very fortunate to be in the main event, he would say. I got all the criticism, like, "Why is this guy in the main event?" I didn't know any holds. I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't know how to stand. But just my sheer presence had such an impact as compared to the other guys who were overweight or old or shorter than me. It's just like you couldn't keep your eyes off of me.

Keller: At what point did you realize you had ring presence?

Konnan: I didn't even know what the hell that was. They call it in Mexico "having an angel." That applies to any wrestler who comes out and from the minute he comes out you are like, "Whoa! Who's this." The last guy to have that in the United States would be Undertaker. You just can't take your eyes off of him. That's called having an angel. Very few wrestlers have that. They would always tell me I have an angel. I always took it for granted because I didn't know what it was. I just always thought people genuinely liked me and I never really got that profoundly into it. I was just so happy that I was up there and people were asking me for my autograph, that's all I really cared about. Now that I'm six years into the business and analyzed it, I go, "I was pretty fortunate" because I did have what they call "that angel."

Keller: How did you make a living before you had the opportunity to wrestle in Mexico?

Konnan: I was in the Navy for approximately seven years. Five of those years I was in the Navy boxing team.

Keller: How long after you got out of the Navy did you start wrestling in Mexico?

Konnan: Well, what happened was in my last year I knew I had to get out. I'm not racist by nature, but the Navy can be very racist. It always seems to me that most of the Latins and the Blacks always got the sh— jobs. It's kind of like the good ol' boys network. It just got to the point where I wasn't doing my work. If I could steal from the service, I would, like food or tools. I just wouldn't do my work. I would spend as much time as I could training. I would use the Navy's time to train to make myself better. I had been in two conflicts. I was in the Iran-Iraq war and I was also in the Lebanon Civil War. I wasn't there doing hand-to-hand combat, but I was off the coast. They were doing bombing runs. We were there for six months at a time at sea with tension never knowing when somebody could blow your ship up. It was always very tension filled. Every night you would have a drill, nuclear drill, a biological or a chemical warfare drill and you had to prepare yourself for such and you didn't

know if it was a real drill or not. Then all of a sudden they would say, "Thank you very much, boys. You guys were ready in five minutes."

I just knew it wasn't for me. I just got into the Navy, to tell you the truth, because growing up in Miami and again being a Latin, the job opportunities were limited, especially if you didn't have a college education, which of course I didn't at 16 or 17. I was running around with the wrong crowd. I'm 30 years old and I've changed now, but I was always the type of guy who if there was a fight, I always wanted to throw the first punch. If we stole a car, I was the one who stole the car and everybody would jump in. I always liked to call attention to myself and I evidently called too much attention to myself because there were two separate gangs that had death notices on me and they wanted to kill me.

Keller: Were you part of a gang yourself?

Konnan: I wasn't part of a formal gang, like a street gang. I was part of a Colombian cocaine gang where we sold cocaine. You are talking about a lot of money there. I was very young and ascending very rapidly and making a lot of enemies. I never stole from anybody or double-crossed anybody because I knew that would mean ultimate death, but I was always very slick and I would always outthink other people. I could always cut better deals than other rival gangs. There was always a lot of animosity and jealousy. I knew for sure I had to leave because I kept looking around and every month one of my friends was dead or missing or in jail. I said that as smart as I think I am, there's no reason I can't be put in jail. One of my own guys could double-cross me. At that time I thought, well I'm gonna join Uncle Sam. Originally I was going to become a Marine because they were the toughest, but I went in there and I ran into some guy who must have had too much napalm. I wanted to be a pilot. He said, "F--- being a pilot. If you're going to be a Marine, you're going to be an infantry man and you're going to fight." So I just went to the Navy.

Keller: Did you get into using drugs yourself when you were younger?

Konnan: That's one thing, I never ever used drugs because I was fortunate—well, I don't think this makes me any smarter than anybody else, but I just saw what drugs did to other people and I said, "Well, why would I want to be like that?" I'd see guys high, throwing up, saying things they didn't mean. I just wondered where the fun part in this was. My father was an alcoholic and he beat the sh— out of my mother and me. Imagine this, being in the Navy, because all they do from my experience is drink, f---, and take drugs and smoke and then being around the boys (wrestlers) and they are basically the same way, do the same things. I've never been drunk and I've never been on drugs.

I have tried it to say, "Hey, I've tried coke or I've tried this." I've been lucky. I've never gotten hooked on anything. To this day I would say the only thing I've taken into my body that you could consider poisonous are foods that are laced with fat, carcinogens in the air, and 'roids.

Keller: How early did you get into using steroids?

Konnan: I would say I discovered steroids in '87. They told me about this stuff called "the juice." I, of course, thought it was orange juice or something. I said, "What supermarket do you buy this at?" They said, "The black market, my man." I've always been a guy who's studied a lot of literature. I started to talk to a lot of bodybuilders. I would say I'm a self-professed expert in the thing. There's not a lot the medical community knows about it, so consequently you have to become self-educated. I did and I think I've used it very wisely. I haven't used it constantly since '87. I would say from '87 to now, which is seven years, I would say I've used it three out of those seven years.

Keller: What are the current laws in Mexico regarding steroids?

Konnan: If you have money there is no such thing as a law. Basically they are controlled substances and you can't have them without a prescription and you can't buy them without a prescription. If you're caught with them, you could probably say, "Hey, I lost my prescription, pay them a little payola and you're out of there. I don't think it's a felony. It's not a big thing in Mexico because the major sport here is soccer. In the United States it's prevalent because you've got offensive linemen who have to be big and strong, you've got basketball and hockey and bodybuilding where you have to be big. In soccer, you just have to be fast. There hasn't been that steroid craze like there has been in the United States, the crackdown on athletes.

Of course, people see me on TV and some people try to say, "He looks like he's on steroids." But I've always said in the media here that I used it when I was a bodybuilder. Even though I'm sincere, you have to be diplomatic. If I would say I am on them right now, these people are so naive that any endorsement that I could get in the future would go down the toilet. Sometimes it's good to be sincere, but you also have to be business-smart.

Keller: When you say you use steroids intelligently or that you use them safely, how does that work from what you've learned about steroids?

Konnan: I would say that there are such things as cycles where you take them for two months and then you have to take another drug so your nuts will come back to normal and your testosterone production will return to its normal levels. For example, I would do my cycle for a month and a half, two months, whatever it was,

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then I would take my gynacore about a month and then go on another cycle or I would wait two or three months. I was always very safe about it. I wasn't like, "I'm gonna go on it five months straight and f--- my nuts." I didn't go about it haphazardly and shoddily. To me the strongest roid I've ever come across is called Anadrol 50 made by Cytex of Palo Alto, Calif. They also make them in Mexico. It's very, very toxic on your liver. I know people taking five when they prescribe one or two. The mentality shouldn't be that you take twice as much as another guy. Your receptor sites can only take so much steroid usage before they shut down and won't accept any more.

Keller: Have you experienced side effects that you attribute to using steroids?

Konnan: I have thinning hair, that's why I wear braids which are basically hair extensions. It's hair braided into my hair. That's hereditary. That has nothing to do with roids. I had thinning hair when I was 13. I don't believe in roid rages or aggressiveness. It really hasn't happened to me. I have experienced severe acne on my back. That's from taking oil-based steroids instead of water-based injections and at the same time eating greasy foods. The other one was at the beginning when I started taking a strong stock and my nipples started to enlarge and they were very, very tender. I haven't had that problem in about two years because now I take them a lot smarter. The other problem would be a lot of problems falling asleep because you're just so loaded with energy.

Keller: Do you think you need to take steroids to be as successful as you are?

Konnan: How successful would Hulk Hogan or The Road Warriors have been without them? We know they had charisma and so did the Ultimate Warrior, but would they have been as successful? Barry Horowitz has charisma, I don't see him going anywhere. I think charisma

plus freakish physique equals success if you're well-promoted and if you're in the right place at the right time.

You have to look at a guy like Tom McGee who I wrestled with when I was in a small, little organization called Muscle Rock in Southern California where Mando Guerrero was a promoter. Tom McGee was there as was Ludvig Borge when he first started. Borge was just like an oaf, but everybody just went crazy over his freakish size because he wasn't fat like he is now. Tom McGee, here is a guy who was good-looking, tall, I thought had a better body than Ultimate Warrior, was doing backflips off the third turnbuckle, and he could do a full split. I heard this guy was going to be the Original Ultimate Warrior. He wasn't all that charismatic, but he was a very good looking guy. The thing is I thought to myself Warrior just got lucky because he was at the right place at the right time, I guess.

Keller: Why didn't McGee make it?

Konnan: First of all, I didn't see him when he first tried out with the WWF. I heard about it. I couldn't say from not seeing it. In this business if you come in as a nice guy and stay in as a nice guy, usually you are going to get f---ed out of a good position because you're always going to have a shark who f---s you out of your position. I feel McGee was too much of a nice guy. Warrior, the very few times I saw him he was always on the edge. He always looked like the guy you didn't want to f--- with. Not that he might beat you up, but he just looked like he was explosive by nature. One of the things I saw that always freaked me out, I had so much respect for Vince McMahon. I was so awed by the WWF I probably would have signed for nothing. I was at a TV taping once and saw Ultimate Warrior storm out of one of those sound rooms. He was talking to McMahon and he shouted, "F--- that, f--- this. I'm not going to do it anymore. I just can't say the words right." Apparently he was supposed to say some lines and they just weren't coming out right. McMahon, I couldn't believe it, who a lot of people say is an a--hole, here he is pacifying him. He's going, "Okay, Jim, I know it's late, I know you're tired. We can do it tomorrow. There's no problem."

One time I had met (Ultimate Warrior) at an airport and because I had to go to the WWF TV tapings, I asked him if he knew where the TV tapings were. He said, "No!" He got off the plane and I saw him get right into a limousine. He just didn't talk to anybody. He was kind of a jerk. But he was probably under a lot of pressure. I can understand that. You can be a jerk at moments, but that doesn't mean you're a jerk overall.

Keller: I'm trying to get inside the mind of a wrestler who uses steroids as part of his equation for success. Do you think you'll look

back on your career and your success with any less pride because you used steroid or do you think perhaps using steroids should not have the stigma it does?

Konnan: I don't know. I believe in that adage that if you're not really hurting anybody else, you've gotta do what you've gotta do to get ahead. I just feel that I have nothing to be ashamed of. I think maybe the newsletter readers have made it a bigger deal than it is. It's like the pitbull, they wanted to outlaw the poor dog because there was a two year span when a couple of pitbulls ripped apart a kid. Yet, here they were in the newspaper reporting that there were other dogs such as the poodle that bit more kids. Of course the bites weren't as savage and they weren't killing them, the jaws weren't as strong, but look in the last few years you haven't heard a lot about the pitbull and he's doing all right. But if you went on with that original yellow journalism if you will, they would have been outlawed a few years ago. Poor dog. I'm sure you've seen some cute pitbulls. It's a cute dog. Just because of a couple guys, everybody got a bad rap.

Keller: Would you recommend steroid use to kids or teenagers growing up if it would help them in sports or even construction work?

Konnan: I think if it was administered by a doctor and you really had a clinical use for it, then yeah. But I don't see why a construction worker or somebody like that would need it. Bodybuilding is just something everybody did and it just makes it look bigger and better. In wrestling we've seen that fans like the freakish look that not everybody has. That's what separates that wrestler from the commonfolk. You see a George "The Animal" Steele and you think, "Gosh, I didn't think people like that existed." You don't even think that's normal. Here's a bald guy with a green tongue who doesn't talk. You see Andre the Giant, too. Wrestling's almost like a freak show. You're presenting a show where we're almost not human. If they're trying to give that perception, you've got to have a body that doesn't look human. You have to follow that script.

Keller: The Mexican style is an extraordinary style, especially when trying to remain injury-free night after night. Just as you could argue Wayne Gretsky was very ordinary looking and didn't have all that much charisma off the ice, it was what he did on the ice in that particular sport that made him a superstar. You could say the same thing about wrestling where size doesn't need to be an ingredient if it's the drama and the soap opera and the high flying moves that sells it more than being larger than life or freakish.

Konnan: Let me clarify. When I was talking I was talking about American wrestling. American wrestling fans have been educated

into the freak shows. You do not see a Hulk Hogan on the street, you do not see a Macho Man. Those guys you don't ever see on the street whereas in Mexico, we're still superhuman—people look at TV and go, "I can't do that." There are the superhuman moves and I don't think there are too many people in Mexico who wear masks for a living. So they see this guy like a Batman character, a superhero when he's in the mask. We go back to that superhero element in Mexico, also. It doesn't rely on heavy gimmickry as in the United States or physical size because the Mexicans are like the Orientals, they are short and light in stature where the Americans and Europeans are like another breed. Then if you go over to the Japanese wrestling, they've been educated on a different brand. It's not that they're superhuman, but they're like super athletes. They have all these stiff moves and they're into realism and the people are into it. Whereas in the U.S. they are more into the show and Mexico is more into athleticism.

If you go to Japan, Mexico, or the United States, all three of them have different food, cultures, music, philosophies, so you have to adjust to each one. I tried to take an ingredient from the United States and put it to work in Mexico which was the freakish physique since nobody had it there. When you're a kid we all had a superhero whether it was Batman or Superman and we were always dazzled on freakish size. You almost equate that with invulnerability.

Keller: How do fans in Mexico perceive pro wrestling and what draws them to the matches?

Konnan: I think they look at it more like it's real than fans in the United States. I'll give you an example. When I go to the United States I have to cross the border. When I get to immigration they'll ask what the purpose of my trip to Mexico was. I'll go I was wrestling. He'll ask, "How did your team do?" They think I'm part of an amateur team. I say, "No, I wrestle on TV." And they do, "Oh, that fake stuff." And they laugh. In Mexico, there are some people who think it's fake, but I think the majority, 70 percent, go, "Hey champ, shake my hand." There's a lot more respect in Mexico like I'm sure there is in Japan because we haven't done a lot of things that Americans have done that insults your intelligence like WCW with that shark thing in the water with Sting or that Vader lives in a cave with cave women and midgets, like that's real believable. Or you've got Jim Hellwig vomiting on TV or Gene Okerlund sweating black because Papa Shango put a spell on him. Give me a break.

I really feel that promoters and wrestlers think that everybody who isn't a promoter or a wrestler is a mark. They think that they'll believe anything, that they'll buy anything. I

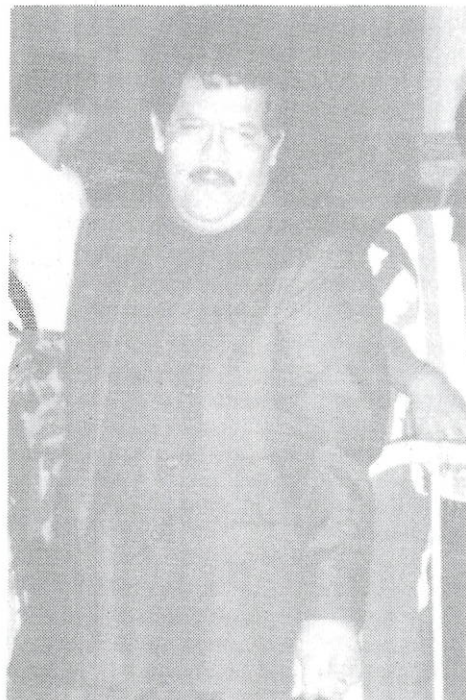
just have to tell them that people have become more sophisticated, they've become better informed, and you're just not going to get away with insulting their intelligence anymore. The proof is that they're not drawing fans anymore at the house shows. In Mexico what gets the people there is that it's a 63 year tradition here in Mexico—63 years it's been a popular sport even when it wasn't on TV. Some of your biggest movie stars were wrestlers. Then the new boom in TV about four years ago that brought all of these new stars, for example, one of them being me. I'm currently in a soap opera, I did a rap record, I'm going to do a movie, I've been in comedies. So Konnan is now not just a wrestler but he's kind of like Hogan, a wrestler/celebrity.

Here there's a lot of juniors—sons of famous wrestlers. In the United States they haven't really been big. Dustin Rhodes hasn't been as big as his father, for instance. Whereas in Mexico, people still follow their hero's sons. Santo was the biggest hero that ever lived in Mexico in any sport. Everybody follows his son because they loved his father so much. Blue Demon and Tineblas and others are examples.

Plus, they follow the storylines. After about 60 years of doing the same, (AAA promoter) Antonio Pena comes in and throws a little Japanese and American magic into it, changes storylines, changes the whole perception, changes everything, and there's a renewed interest.

Keller: What are the main changes that Pena made compared to before AAA was formed a few years ago?

Konnan: For many years the main event was



Antonio Pena

Photo Mike Lano

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always the heavyweights, always. It's almost like Japan. They still relegate or delegate the junior heavyweights to a lower position on the totem pole whereas now in AAA if Liger were here he would be in a main event wrestling one of the heavyweights in his promotion like Scott Norton. You see those matches sometimes at house shows, but Pena would put it on TV. So he's given the lighter weights a chance to work with the heavyweights but all logically. That was taboo for many, many years.

He's given the youth a big chance. Rey Mysterio Jr., Psicosis, Heavy Metal were given a chance to in their first and second years to be in the third and semi-final matches. Before a young guy would take a minimum of eight years before he would ever be in the third match because it was called paying your dues. Pena said f--- paying your dues, these guys have talent and he put them on TV right away. They've come away with some of the most innovative moves and some unique matches, so it paid off.

He gave it the American glitz. Before, Mexican's would go up to the ring in their trunk without any special effects. Now you've got music, lights, smoke, ring girls, and all these elaborate outfits. He came up with all of these new gimmicks because he came out with Octagon and Volador and Mascara Sagrada. He started to do things that had never been done in Mexico, like cage matches had never been seen here. Now in the United States a cage match means nothing. But in Mexico, they hadn't seen a cage match in 60 years. All of a sudden they saw one. He started to bring in a lot of

foreigners, a lot more foreigners than before to play off that nationalism, Mexico vs. United States.

One of the biggest successes he had was the little midgets, who aren't midgets, they're dwarfs—there's a big difference. These guys are incredible. There is nobody on Earth who could ever do what they do. And they've become a big success. The idea was very cute, if you will. You get a big wrestler like let's say Mascara Sagrada and you get a little dwarf and you call him Mascara Sagrada which basically translates to Little Mascara Sagrada. It's cute. Kids love them. He just revolutionized it.

Keller: How have the demographics changed if at all in the last two or three years?

Konnan: Triple-A started two and a half years ago. We were all with the Arena Mexico and we all left Arena Mexico and started AAA—me, Pena, and a whole bunch of other guys.

The demographics changed when Pena was with the Arena Mexico and then a lot of those guys came with AAA. What happened was, wrestling wasn't on TV for 30 years because it was deemed too violent. I don't know how it happened, but they finally got wrestling back on TV. It was only on for one hour on Sunday. It was the number one rated show in Mexico for two years. There was no show that got higher ratings. Then for many, many years in a lot of towns we would get FBI agents—and FBI agents in Mexico aren't like FBI agents in the United States. In Mexico they are very poorly paid. They basically run organized crime. They are shabby individuals. They're usually hanging around with gamblers, cut-throats, and prostitutes. So you would go to Mexico and get FBI agents, prostitutes, drug dealers—you just got the lowest scumbags on Earth because they liked violence. It was kind of seedy, smoke-filled arenas. It was very normal in a match for a wrestler to get into a fight with an FBI agent and turn around and have five guns pointed at his head or drug dealers waiting for him outside. It just seemed like there was the match inside the ring and the match outside of the ring. Many a night I got into fights with the fans. There was just a seedy element about it.

Then when TV came out Pena decided to make it a little more elegant. Consequently, families started to move. As families started to move in, gamblers started to move out. Since the prices went up, the lower echelon of society could no longer afford to go to those shows, so they were just pushed out by economics. Then you just started to get what we call a prettier crowd. When we started AAA, the crowd got even prettier because the prices got even higher to justify our higher salaries and so you got a little bit more of high society. It's not the highest up of society, but it was higher society, upper-middle and lower-higher and we were

attracting movie and TV stars. Basically now that seedy element doesn't come that much. They certainly don't come to TV matches. When you do house shows, you get middle or lower-middle class.

Keller: How many shows in a one month period does AAA run these days?

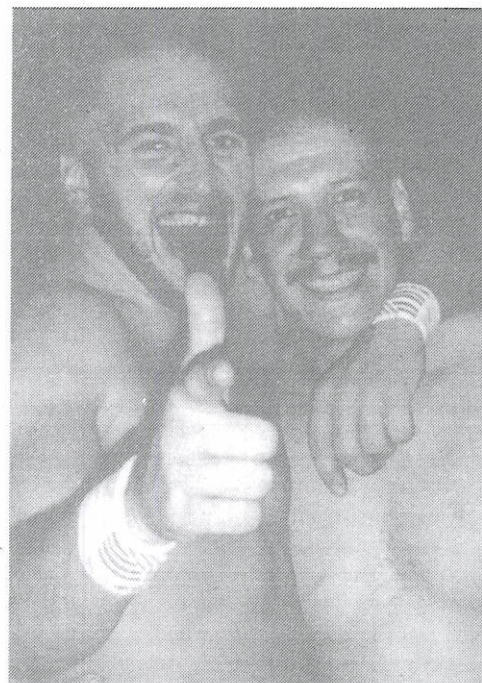
Konnan: There was a time at the height of Arena Mexico when 96 shows were run a week involving 200 wrestlers. I was working legitimately sometimes 12 times a week seven days a week in front of between 3,000 and 5,000 fans. Now AAA because of economics and the war between the three promotions, which has been dishonest, it has fallen alarmingly low to an average of about 20 house shows a week for AAA. Arena Mexico runs about 15 and the UWA runs about 10.

Keller: How drastically has the standard of living or pay for wrestlers in Mexico gone up compared to five years ago?

Konnan: When I started I was making about \$100 a match my first year. Then when it became a, quote-unquote, big star I was making about \$500. Right before I left Arena Mexico I was making \$1,000 a match. Last year in AAA which was my best year in wrestling I was making \$1,500 a match. Right now because of economics I am making about \$1,200 a match. I am the highest paid wrestler right now in Mexico. There was a time when Vampiro was, but no longer.

Keller: How often do you wrestle now?

Konnan: About four times a week. I'm gonna go on a guarantee now which only Love Machine, Eddy Guerrero, and Black Katt have.



Love Machine & Eddy Guerrero

Photo Mike Lano

Only Vampiro and Negro Casas have it in the other promotion. That way whether I work once or 15 times, I get the same amount of money. I'll be making probably about \$5,000 a week. I'll become definitely very well paid.

Keller: How important is merchandising to either your career or in Mexico in general?

Konnan: Mexico is very, very disorganized when it comes to merchandising. They don't know how to do it. They haven't capitalized on it. It's a big gold mine that's gotten away from them. They haven't tapped into the 900 thing. They haven't tapped into the pay-per-view. They are light years away from all of that. I hope now that with them dealing with WCW now that WCW will show them what merchandising is all about, what pay-per-view is all about. I make a lot of money by taking pictures after the match. Every night I'll make about \$100 a night, four times a week. I imagine all the money I could have made on the shirts they made of me and all the dolls and Televisa has made calendars of me and I've never seen a cent of it.

Keller: Will you be content wrestling in Mexico the rest of your career or do you have aspirations to be a big star also in the United States or even elsewhere?

Konnan: The bigger the name I am in Mexico the better they have to use me in Japan because in Japan they respect a lot how big a star you are in another country. That's why I've always told everybody I want to go to Japan. I've been to Japan once with (Atsushi) Onita and that was four years ago. That's not the case in the United States. I would like to be a big star. My dream as a kid was to be a big wrestler in the NWA. Just to have that as a feather in my cap, I would like to work in the WWF, but only if I work on top. I would like to work there.

Keller: Is it likely you will work in the WWF?

Konnan: I was there for a whole year and a half doing (dark matches at) TV tapings. I think there are other guys who have left on worse conditions than me and come back, so there's no reason why I can't return. But I will not look for them. It has almost become a pride thing with me.

Vince McMahon told me one time when I was at his office—he dedicated a good two hours to me—at that time I was considering whether I was going to go with Joe Pedicino or McMahon. Pedicino was promising me the top spot in the junior heavyweight division in his new promotion out of Dallas. WCW was talking about maybe making me a team with Brian Pillman and using me good. I told Vince McMahon I don't know because the only thing he pushes were the guys who are bigger and heavier. He said, "We've been looking for somebody like you and don't worry I'm going to give you a push." I told him, "Well, I'm going

to have to think about it." He told me and it always stuck to me and he seemed pretty confident when he said it: "It doesn't matter where you go because sooner or later you'll end up here." I sort of have a feeling in the back of his mind he's got to come across my name somehow somewhere. It's not like we went to New York and he didn't hear about it or we went to L.A. and he didn't hear about it, especially when we drew four times what he draws. I will die with my pride. If he doesn't call me, I will never go back there again.

Keller: Was that two hour meeting your first with McMahon?

Konnan: Yes. He was a very pleasant, very intelligent, very nice guy. I've heard a million bad things about him and I'm sure he's made a lot of enemies along the way, but you don't get to the top by being friends with everybody and that's just a fact of life. He was very nice and very straight-forward with me. He bent over backwards to help me a lot. Pat Patterson helped me incredibly. I think the guys who really rocked me at the end were Chief Jay Strongbow and J.J. Dillon and Bobby Heenan. They, from all reports I got, and of course it's all hearsay, they were kind of like the guys who said, "He's too much trouble to fly in. The boys don't want him." Some of the boys were really jealous because at the time I was 200 pounds and here was Vince McMahon investing \$13,000 in a robot outfit and I would only go in for TV tapings. I would miss some of them, but they needed me in Mexico, too. I flew in Love Machine from Portland instead of using the jobbers they had in Florida at the time. People found out about that. They were jealous about that and me being only 200 pounds. They are so stupid because if they thought about it, I would have made them look that much better because I would have sold for them and added a new dimension that at that time they didn't have before 1-2-3 Kid was there. They don't look at it whether I'm helping the promotion. All wrestlers think how can I help myself. I've always been a promotion man. If I would have been in the WWF, I would have given 3,000 percent for them.

I think the WWF was kind of dumb. Here I am, the biggest draw in Mexico and we know that 70 percent of the Hispanic population in the United States is Mexican. We know that by the year 2000 the biggest minority group in the United States will be Hispanics. Here I am, I grew up in Miami, so I could cater to the Cuban crowd in Miami, in New Jersey, and in other large cities because I can talk Cuban slang. That's how Hispanics know if you're for real or not, they listen to your slang. A guy from Britain and a guy from the United States both speak English, but they don't speak the same slang. Here I was. My father was Puerto Rican. I would have been able to cater to all of the

It's not like we went to New York and (Vince McMahon) didn't hear about it or we went to L.A. and he didn't hear about it, especially when we drew four times what he draws. I will die with my pride. If he doesn't call me, I will never go back to the WWF again.

Puerto Ricans. Since Pedro Morales they haven't had a Puerto Rican star. I would have been able to grab the three biggest Latin populations and somehow get them into the building. If he doesn't believe me, all he has to do is look at some of the houses we've done in San Jose, L.A. We've drawn that on a handicap because most Americans (a) don't look at it; we hardly have any Americans unless they're hardcore wrestling fans; and (b) here we are on a cable system that we have to pay for. Can you imagine if I were on free TV with the projection the WWF could give me. I'd be packing in Latins all over the place. That's a major mistake on their part, but that's their loss, I feel.

Keller: What happened in the negotiations that caused you to not be one of the wrestlers they pushed?

Konnan: The negotiations were going fine. Vince McMahon treated me great. Pat Patterson treated me great. There were only two things I didn't like. One, in the contract they didn't say they'd cover you if you got hurt. Vince told me, "My past history will show that when a wrestler gets hurt, we take care of them." I thought to myself, "Yeah, but it doesn't say that on the contract." I didn't make a big thing about it. The other thing I did not like at all was that you had to work on a percentage. He said, "Everybody here works on a percentage. It doesn't matter who it is." I thought to myself, "How am I going to know if that percentage is legit. I don't know that what your accountant is doing or what you guys are doing is a natural reflection of the percentage. So I didn't like that idea.

Pat Patterson told me once I was getting heat with the boys for bragging about how much I was making in Mexico. I just remember one

time a guy asked me how much I make and I told him. That got back to Pat that I was boasting and thought they were just sh—. Here I was, 200 pounds and everybody else was on roids. Why was I getting a \$13,000 gimmick and why wasn't I on the road with them. I wasn't really one of the boys because I wasn't on the road and they looked at me as a Mexican, I guess. They were demeaning toward me. I heard that Bobby Heenan once said, "Oh, he looks like a jumping Mexican bean, it doesn't make sense what he's doing." I just guess it got to be a little clique that got me out. In a way they did push me out. The next thing I knew one day I didn't show up for one of the TV tapings and Paul Diamond joked that he fit into the outfit and knew how to do all those moves. So Vince said, "You've been here a long time, let's give you a chance." Obviously he didn't know how to do all the moves and obviously it wasn't me because it was my idea for the robot and he just didn't make it.

Keller: Do you resent that they took a gimmick that was conceptually your idea and gave it to someone else?

Konnan: No, because this is a business and I know they've stolen other gimmicks. I really didn't care. I was just glad when they fell on their faces. Vince probably doesn't give a damn because it's just one of many that has gone awry. Me, personally? I'm okay with it because he tried to screw me and it didn't work. I tell ya' I would have given Vince five thousand percent. I would have gone into Hispanic schools. I would have gotten kids in there. I just think I

I know that if I hit somebody with a clothesline or I do a dive over the rope, I'm going to get the same applause because I'm that over. Why risk diving over the rope and slipping and hurting myself and losing \$1,200 per night?

can be very articulate with the youth and I would have gotten them into the venues.

Keller: In terms of your in-ring skills at that time and now, do you think your style fits in best with the Japanese, Mexican, or U.S. style? Or can you adapt to anything?

Konnan: My big mistake with the WWF was when I would wrestle I wanted to wrestle pure Mexican style because I wanted to give them something different. If I would have been a little bit smarter I would have done what Scorpio does and 1-2-3 Kid does and Chris Benoit does. They put a little bit of Mexican with Japanese and American and give a three-fold flavor. That's what I probably should have done back then and they wouldn't have been so confused. Even Vince told me I did five moves he never saw in his life. To understand them to begin with you have to slow them down. I was like a little roller coaster.

But now I don't think I'm a great wrestler. I think I'm a great worker unless you put me in with somebody totally bad. There's not too many things I can do with Cien Caras who is old and limited. There aren't a lot of things I can do with Jake (Roberts) because of his weight and our styles clash a lot. I don't have the ability to carry a bad wrestler, not that Jake is a bad wrestler. I think I can work any style and get over anywhere.

Keller: Do you consider your in-ring skills in terms of workrate average or above or below?

Konnan: I think it's above average, but I've become very complacent. I know that if I hit somebody with a clothesline or I do a dive over the rope, I'm going to get the same applause because I'm that over. Why risk diving over the rope and slipping and hurting myself and losing

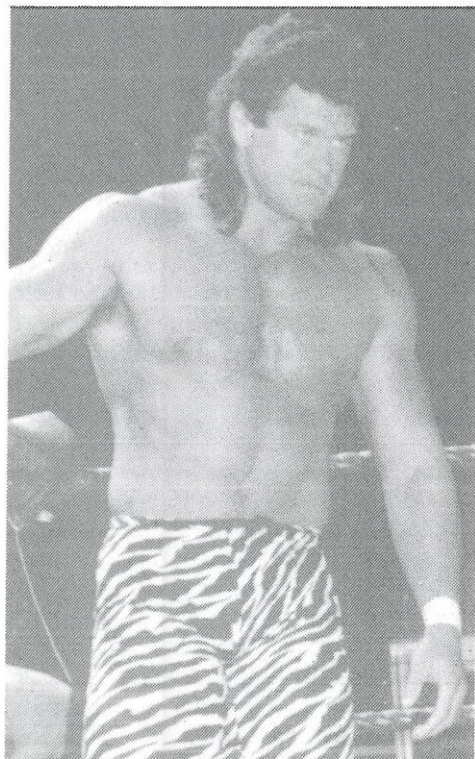
don't do any high risk moves anymore like I did when I started. That's why in the *Observer* they voted me as "most unimproved" and I agree with that. Why should I improve when I'm getting over with what I gotta do. I really put my working boots on when I have to come to the United States to work in front of a crowd that's never seen me like when I wrestled Sabu in New York or when I used to go to WCW or WWF tapings. I'm sure from all accounts that I always had pretty good matches. Of course when I go to Japan in December with AAA I will put my working boots back on, but when I'm in Mexico I can almost be in first gear because I'm very over.

Keller: What was your experience with WCW before this most recent alliance was formed?

Konnan: They were cool with me. At that time Ole Anderson was the booker. I told him when he called that I really wanted to go to WCW because they have better talent. He said, "Don't bullsh— me. Do you want to come or not?" I got mad. I said, "I really think you have better talent than the WWF." They had the Steiner Brothers, Barry Windham, and I started telling him all the guys they had.

I went down there and was flabbergasted because I'm a big Bobby Eaton fan and he's one of the most professional guys I've seen in my life. I'll never forget this. They told Bobby Eaton, "We need Konnan to go over." Bobby Eaton did not even make a smirk. He just looked and said, "How do you want to go over." I said, "Wow, what a great guy." Everybody was a big Bobby Eaton fan. He was smart. He knew that even though I beat him, people knew I wasn't better than him. Wrestling fans basically know it's a work. But they're not sure where it's a work. You know magic isn't really magic. You know somewhere the guy hid the coin, but you're not sure how it happened. Plus you have to go in there with the mindset to be entertained and fooled because if you and I are watching Terminator and we're trying to watch where the fake parts or special effects are, that would be boring. Barry Windham was great with me, too. He could have been such a great superstar in the WWF. Everybody there was basically nice with me.

The only guy I thought was very fake was Ric Flair and that was when we were in the WWF. Lex Luger, brother, that guy's got an ego. I was happy in WCW. I wanted to wrestle with Pillman and guys my weight. I'll tell you why I didn't go to WCW because that was my dream as a little kid. Red Bastien had told Pat Patterson about me and Patterson saw me on the Starrcade and he called me and said, "Hey, we'd like you to come in." Here I was, wow, WCW wants me, WWF wants me, Joe Pedicino wants me. I said, "Thank you very much, Pat, but I'm going to go to WCW." He said, "All right. If you change



Paul Diamond

Photo WK

your mind, let me know." This is why I went to the WWF. Ole Anderson left and Dusty Rhodes was going to come in as booker and Jim Ross told me, "Please don't go to the WWF because I will bring you in personally to WCW." But he never called me to reassure me. I'll never forget it. New Year's day I was watching the Miami Hurricanes on TV, my favorite football team, and Pat Patterson called me and said, "Happy new year. Just calling to see how your negotiations are going with WCW." I said, "You know what, they haven't called me. I'll be in Stamford next week."

I got there and there was a limousine waiting for me. I was out there and I'll never forget it. Percy Pringle was sitting out there. He said, "Man, they just made my Christmas. I'm gonna be working for the WWF. I'm so happy." I asked, "Did you get to talk to Vince?" He said, "No, I talked to Pat." All of a sudden I thought I wasn't going to be able to talk to Vince. All of a sudden there was Vince and we talked for two hours. He just charmed the pants off of me.

Keller: What do you think of Bret Hart?

Konnan: This is a funny story. You can ask Bret Hart and he'll even admit it. That's why I like that guy so much. People are funny because sometimes people can be nice in front of you, but you never know how they are when you leave. But I thought Bret was authentic. Bret Hart, when I got in there, said, "Hey, say hi to Babyface" who was a Mexican wrestler he had met in Japan. He was real nice and real cool. He didn't look at me as a threat. I have the utmost respect for Bret Hart. I think he's great, incredible. It was about time they gave him that spot. You will not believe this. You know that sharpshooter he does? He didn't know how to do this. He just said in the dressing room out loud, "Hey, does anybody know how to do that thing where you cross the legs and turn around like in Japan." I said, "Oh, you mean the thing that Sting does." He said, "Yeah." So I showed it to him. The next thing I know that was his finishing move. I've always felt proud about that.

When I came back to the WWF, listen to this—this is why I love this guy so much. I had forgotten that I had showed him the move. He goes, "Hey, you're the guy who showed me the sharpshooter." He's beyond reproach.

Keller: What about Ric Flair?

Konnan: Ric Flair, what a fake that guy is. Ric Flair was my hero since I was a little kid. What a persona, what an interview, everything. The guy's incredible. But, he always seemed to me as being ultra-diplomatic. This is what he did for me, which I think was the fakest thing on Earth and I lost a lot of respect for him. He may charm other people, but he no longer charms me. We were in the WWF and I was there with my boss Antonio Pena and we were talking to

Vince McMahon because there was a big project in consideration at the time to do dual shows with Arena Mexico when Antonio Pena still worked over there. What Vince McMahon wanted to do was to come to Mexico with his whole WWF troop, but he didn't want to wrestle with Mexicans. He just wanted to bring the WWF into Mexico. Then he wanted us to go into Hispanic communities in the U.S. alone without the WWF wrestlers, but he would lend us the arena and the ring and help us with the promotion. That was what we were going to do.

So we're in the back waiting for Vince McMahon and my boss goes, "Oh, look, there's Ric Flair. Why don't we get a picture for the newspapers in Mexico?" Most wrestling fans know who Ric Flair is. So I had a camera and I go to Ric, "Hey, can I take a picture of you with my boss." He said, "Oh, sure, no problem." Then I said, "Let me go get him." While I was turning the corner, I dropped something and I heard him telling one of the guys from security, "Get those f---in' guys out of here with that f---in' camera." The guy came up and said, "You can't be back here and you can't have a camera." I said, "Hey, we're the invited guests of Vince McMahon, so cool out." So the next thing you know, get this, Antonio Pena and I are in there talking with Vince McMahon and J.J. Dillon and then Ric Flair comes in and he goes, "Well, I'm taking off Vince." And he shakes my hand and says, "Good night, sir. Take it easy." Good night my ass. What made me laugh is how fake he was. He said, "Good night, sir" as if I had some power and that Vince must like me because he's actually in there talking to me. Then, here's the funny part. He calls me sir. Here I am 27 years old and this guy's like 43 and he's calling me sir. Get out of here. In the ring, he's still the best. But as a person, his credibility has fallen.

Keller: How about Hulk Hogan?

Konnan: He just always seemed to be very busy. He knows he's a big celebrity. The only thing I kind of like about Hulk Hogan is that he's got this aura about him. He's almost always in character when he's outside with the public. But I asked him once for a picture in the dressing room for Mexico publicity purposes. He just always seems to be busy. There's nothing I like or dislike about him.

I do respect him because he's probably the wrestler who has gone the furthest with the help that he got. You have to respect that. I don't know if he really did a lot of things Randy Savage said he did to him. I don't know what the problems were with the WWF. I really don't know. But I look at him and I don't really think much about him. I admire him because he has such a large allegiance of followers. I see him, though, and he does nothing for me.

Keller: Does he have "the angel" or that

charisma you talked about?

Konnan: Yeah, he's got that angel. I can almost see why he had it and why he still has it. He's a great interview. He does things very smart. He knew what worked in Wrestlemania so he recreated that last summer when he brought Shaquille O'Neil in. He knows how to self-promote. I think he learned from Vince McMahon because there's no way he learned himself. I think he's been one of Vince McMahon's best students in self-promotion. He's almost become a P.T. Barnum for WCW, so he's been smart in that respect. But I look at him and he doesn't do much for me and we've never really talked.

The only thing I don't like about him is that he tries to stick everybody in there like Brutus Beefcake. It's almost like he has to bring all these people with him. In a way, I guess, that's good because you show a certain allegiance, but I don't think you should be making conditions on bringing in other wrestlers when the promotion only needs you.

Keller: Have you had much experience with Sting?

Konnan: Not really. Sting was always kind of like a prima donna and he may have had his own dressing room most of the time. He never talked to me. He either had his own dressing room or kept to himself a lot when I was in WCW. Nothing good or bad about him, I just love his outfits.

Keller: What about Lex Luger?

Konnan: He's a pain in the ass. I went in there and was doing some moves with Tim Horner and Brian Pillman and Pillman was saying, "I love Super Astro from Mexico. How does he do this one move." I didn't know how to do it, but was explaining it to him and we started to do some Mexican moves in the ring. Lex Luger said mockingly to Linda Ruffa, a photographer, in a gay-like voice, "I guess I'm going to have to learn some new moves." He was always looking at himself in the mirror and he always thought he was a bigshot. He just had this air of arrogance about him. Narcissist fits him perfectly. He wasn't very well liked, but I'll tell ya', I'm not very well liked. I'm not in here to be liked, anyway. Luger might be a nice guy if you sit down with him and have a beer. Sometimes you know you're around the boys and sometimes you have to be in character all the time. He may be a nice guy, I don't know.

One person I admire is Roddy Piper because everywhere he went he was a star. His interviews and his charisma. I just can't believe he isn't a bigger star than he is. I don't think he capitalized like Hogan did. I met Roddy in the WWF. I started to like Roddy Piper partly because of Love Machine because I guess he's the guy who came up with the Betteljuice character. I used to watch Roddy Piper in L.A.

Another jerk is Owen Hart. I'll say that to his face. I know a lot of people are going to read this and if the wrestler himself doesn't read this, it will get back to him. Everything I publish I will say to a wrestler's face. I don't think I'm the toughest or the baddest, but I will back up my words.

when I was a little kid and he'd make fun of Chavo Guerrero. I always loved him. How could you not like that guy, he was hilarious. I just didn't know that he had given a lot of ideas for Wrestlemania I. Machine is like his one man promotional band. He got me to start to like him. The only thing about him is I feel he could have capitalized a lot more on his initial success in the WWF and become a bigger success than he is.

Keller: What about Brian Pillman?

Konnan: I used to see him on TV and I used to hate him. I used to think what a good looking fag. I've always hated most guys that are good looking that kind of look feminine because we used to beat those guys up when I was young. They just spent all the time looking at themselves in the mirror. They attract a lot of girls. That was a definite beating up. But when I met him he was cool, he was nice with me, he has turned into a great wrestler, and I think they haven't known how to use him. Tom Zenk, on the other hand, was always complaining about everything. That guy is a consummate complainer. "Nobody likes me." This and that. Another jerk is Owen Hart. I'll say that to his face. I know a lot of people are going to read this and if the wrestler himself doesn't read this, it will get back to him. Everything I publish I will say to a wrestler's face. I don't think I'm the toughest or the baddest, but I will back up my words.

Keller: What is it about Owen Hart that separates him so much from his brother in your opinion?

Konnan: When he was in Canada everybody just hated him. I'll never forget this. I'm not

going to say who I was with because he might get heat with Owen, but when we were in the dressing room and I was putting on all these Mexican moves when I was in Stampede, when I left, he went in there and said, "I don't want anyone doing Konnan's Mexican moves because he's stealing them all from me." I'm thinking to myself, "So what, are you saying that you invented every move you know?" So the guys would tell me, "Hey, Owen doesn't want us doing your move." Nobody could sell gimmicks except Owen and his brother Bruce. I loved Bruce. Everybody hated him. And I loved Stu. But Owen was just a jerk. Here he was, the Blue Blazer in the WWF, a top boy in Canada, he was a star in Japan, this guy thought he was Mr. Everything. I've never liked him and I know he doesn't like me.

I would say that the guy I liked the least—Jim Neidhart always used to talk bad about me, but he was always drinking, so I don't know if he meant it—but I know the guy one day I'm going to have problems with is Jerry Sags from the Nasty Boys. I'll never forget this. We were sitting down in the WWF one day during one of the TV tapings. They think they're so funny because they're always pulling ribs on people. They pulled a rib on Eddy Guerrero by shaving his eyebrows off and Love Machine's eyebrows off. They're going to pay dearly for that. Anyway, I was sitting down. They must think it's their job to be funny at anyone's expense. He made this outlandish comment, "Oh look, it's the Mexican jumping bean." I had a plate and I told Paul Diamond I was going to break his nose. I was just going to take the metallic plate like you have in prison and I was just going to hit him as hard as I could and just keep beating the sh-- out of him. I was going to show everybody from right now that nobody's going to f--- with me. Diamond said, "You don't want no trouble. You just got in here." He calmed me down.

I don't like people f---ing with me if I don't f--- with them. I try to respect anybody and everybody. I think The Bushwackers are the nicest guys in the world. Greg Valentine, what a nice guy. Bob Orton, what a nice guy. Those guys don't mess with anybody. Barbarian, what a super nice guy. Why do you have to be f---ing with everybody?

Keller: You mentioned 1-2-3 Kid earlier as a wrestler who has incorporated some Mexican style into his WWF matches. What do you think of him?

Konnan: He sent me a tape once because he wanted to come to Mexico. I showed it to my boss. He said, "He's too ugly." I said that if he thought that, put a mask on him. He told me, "Basically everything he does we've got other guys who can do it cheaper." So that was what happened.

Keller: What about Too Cold Scorpio?

Konnan: I met him in New York and Chicago. I usually get along with black guys because I grew up in a black neighborhood. He was cool, he makes me laugh. That one and a half (flip splash) is not to be believed. He's great. Nice guy. I went out with him in Chicago. I wish him all the luck. If I can one day I'll help him get into AAA. I feel bad they got rid of him and not Marcus Bagwell.

Keller: What about Sabu?

Konnan: Sabu. Wow. Every time you think you've seen it all, somebody else comes out and does it crazier or better. Sabu is just it. When you think Onita's crazy, then you see Sabu. Then you see Terry Funk doing a moonsault at age 50. Then you see the Great Sasuke in Japan doing the most death-defying moves I've ever seen in my life. You think Cactus Jack has done it all, but when you think you've seen it, somebody crazier comes along and right now it's Sabu. I told him I couldn't believe what he does doesn't hurt and he said it doesn't hurt. I will not believe that. I can't see him lasting more than five years, but then again, he might. He was a nice guy with me. He has a lot of respect for history. He respects the Sheik a lot. He respects Onita too much. We had a big conversation about that. Sabu said he kept asking Onita for a raise and he wouldn't give it to him. I'm assuming he's since gotten it. He said he was loyal because he gave him his break in the business. I told him, "You don't have to be thankful for that. If he didn't start you, he would have started somebody else. And if he had you in the main event, it's because you deserved to be there. No promoter is going to have you in no main event just because he likes you. He's making money off of you and you're a good wrestler. Okay, he gave you a chance. Somebody had to give you a chance. They have to give somebody a chance because you can't just always have the same wrestlers. Don't be forever grateful if the guy doesn't want to give you a raise. If he really wanted you or liked you that much, he'd give you a raise because you deserve one."

He said, "Well, I don't want to go to the WWF because I started with Onita and he gave me a chance." F--- all that. Mora used to say that with me in Tijuana. He'd say, "I started you. You owe me." I would always fall for that. Then in retrospect, I think if I'm there it's because I'm making him money. He ain't gonna have nobody there who isn't making him money just because he likes them. "You earned your spot, now get paid for it." I hope Sabu makes money because he may some day be paralyzed and wish he would have made more money. Onita was nice to me when I went there, but he's kind of a money-miser.

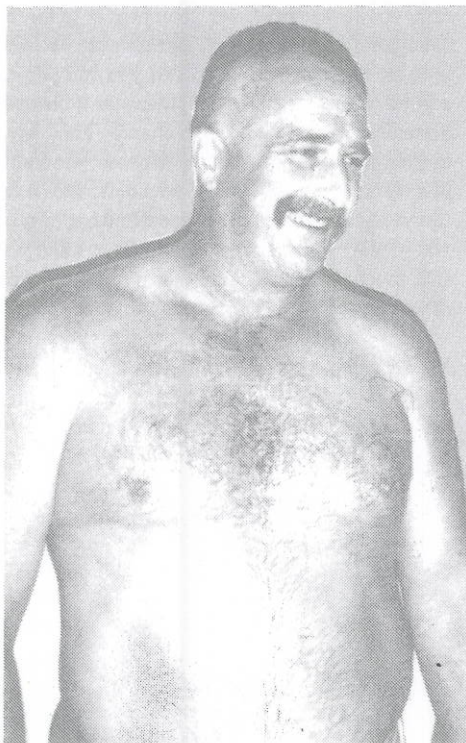
Keller: How was it working with Jake

Roberts given how different he is from the usual lot of AAA wrestlers?

Konnar: When I met Jake I had been seeing him on TV so long, I almost felt like a fan of his rather than his rival. I would just do anything he told me and sometimes the matches weren't up to my standards, but I had so much respect for him, I would let things fall below my standards. Now I've gotten so much criticism for it that the last few matches we had were a lot better because I started pushing him a little bit harder and he started responding. I think if you don't push Jake, he doesn't respond. He's a character. He's got a lot of personal problems, but then again who doesn't. He's got a special place in my heart. I just wish him well and I hope he gets his problems fixed.

Keller: Going way back, were you ever able to cross paths with Mil Mascaras?

Konnar: Oh yes. If you were to put the word egotistical, narcissistic, self-centered, and Mr. Everything into one, it would be him. It's always him, him, him, him. He's beat up every wrestler who ever got in his face. He's outshot every shooter. He's f---ed every airline stewardess and waitress he's ever met. This guy can make love 15 times in a night. This guy designed the rocket that went to the moon. He's done everything. Is there anything he hasn't done. Not many people know this, but he ran Clinton's campaign. He's done it all. You've got to get out of a room when you're with him. I really think when he goes to bed he pushes a button and hears applause. He's the smartest wrestler I've ever met in my life as far as books. I think he's read every book on every subject



Jake Roberts

Photo Mike Lano

known to man. He can talk to you about how France became a country. He can talk to you about the American Civil War. He can tell you about how the automobile was invented. He knows everything. The way he learned that is he travelled so much, he would ask questions and read wherever he went.

Keller: Did you ever wrestle him?

Konnar: Yeah. I was almost like the new Mil Mascaras coming up, but he wouldn't help me. I learned more from him than any other wrestler because I learned how to if you want to make sure somebody doesn't shine in a match because he definitely did it to me a lot of times. That's in my little book. If I want to, I can make any rookie look like sh--. He did that to me.

Keller: How did he do that?

Konnar: If you've ever seen a Mexican match, it always starts the same. You get on the mat and do holds and counter-holds. Then after that you do a highspot and go into the finish. Then usually the babyface will beat you with something. That's almost every Mexican match. Holds and counter-holds, you do a highspot, and you do your finishing move. What he would do is when we were doing holds and counter holds, he'd get me in a semi-shoot move and start shaking me like I was giving up until the referee said, "He gives up, he gives up." You know how embarrassing it is to lose in two minutes while you're doing holds and counter holds. We would lock up and then he would push me into the ropes so it looked like I was backing away from him because I was afraid of him. He would say, "Come on, chicken." It would look like I was backing off of him. He would do little things like that. He would start saying, "Mexico, Mexico" because I'm not Mexican and get the crowd against me. Twice we almost got into a fight. He took off his boots and threw them. "Come on, I'm not afraid of you. I beat this guy up. You think I won't beat you up." I knew that if I fought with him, he'd kill me. I'd never get work in Mexico again because he had a lot of power. At the beginning of my career guys like him and his brother Dos Caras and Canek had me by the balls because I wanted to fight with them, but I couldn't because I knew they would kick me out of the promotion.

Another guy I like. Some people talk bad about him, but I think he's cool. He's done a lot with his promotion, Paul E. Dangerously. Funny, crazy guy. I like him. We're around the same wave length. You can publish this. He promised he'd bring me in one day and I'm still waiting. He was going to be Jim Crockett's booker and he was going to bring Eddy Guerrero, Love Machine, and me in and it never materialized. Then he started ECW and I thought he'd call me up then because he was bringing in Too Cold and Sabu and a lot of other

Oh yes. If you were to put the word egotistical, narcissistic, self-centered, and Mr. Everything into one, it would be him (Mil Mascaras). It's always him, him, him, him.

people in. I wish he'd bring me, Love Machine, and Eddy Guerrero in because right now I'm teammates with them. I think we'd just rock Philadelphia on its ear.

Keller: Talk about Vampiro?

Konnar: Vampiro, what can I say. He came into Mexico and he was a real big, big, big star. His popularity has dipped because a lot of times for press conferences he hasn't shown up, a lot of times he was gonna give away tickets at the Arena Mexico and he never showed up. Then he said he was going to quit wrestling because he had epilepsy and asthma, but yet he was going to start a rock band. I would publicly put in newspapers that it takes the same energy to play a guitar and jump up and down on stage as it does wrestling, so he can't have epilepsy or asthma. Then when his rock and roll career died, he came back into wrestling. To get sympathy he had a match against Canek in Canek's building and he had an oxygen tank in the corner. He just started to lose a lot of credibility. His glamour was starting to wear thin. He was no longer the new kid on the block. He was the new kid with two years behind him and nothing new to show for it. There was just a lot of jealousy because there were four made for TV superstars—Solomon Grundy, Octagon, me, and Vampiro. All four of us became big, big stars when the television boom started. There was a lot of professional jealousy, then it turned into personal jealousy.

He always says I'm nice when he sees me and that I talk bad behind his back. I always felt the same about him. He would always bad-mouth my promotion when he was in the EMLL. I told Ron Skoler I did not want to work with him because I helped him start his negotiations with AAA and I felt it was a stab in the back to bring Vampiro in when we didn't need him. The guy wasn't drawing at the Olympic so the guy wasn't going to draw with us. But I guess Vampiro convinced him or he thought it was a good idea and he brought him in. I went into the dressing room and you can ask Vampiro and he may deny it all night, but I will say it over and over again. We got into the dressing room in L.A. and he said, "What's your problem." I said,

"What's your problem." And I took off my jacket and said, "Let's go brothers, let's do it right now. Let's get this thing over with." He said, "I don't want to fight." In the ring he was very professional. I will admit that because he did the job for me, which must have been very hard considering how much he doesn't like me and considering his fans are going to see it on national TV. All the boys in his promotion are going to say, "Why the hell did you go there? To do the job for Konnan." There were two falls. I beat him in the first with a powerbomb. Then I beat Perro Aguayo in the second fall and I turned heel. He never beat me, he hardly ever touched me because what we did was done so he wouldn't be seen or get any exposure. All the attention was focused on us because I turned on Perro Aguayo and I made him bleed, so all of the attention was on us. He just basically became a cheerleader.

He talked bad about a lot of our wrestlers in the magazines. He said, "I'll never go back there. I hate them" and this and that. He does all that so he can look good in front of his boss, but he's kind of stupid because what happens—and this could happen—the day maybe his promotion starts going down and his payoffs get cut and fewer fans are going and he wants to be back. What happens then? He was very professional in the ring and has definitely gotten a lot better as a wrestler, but he definitely has two personalities.

Keller: Who are the top five wrestlers in AAA?

Konnan: Eddy Guerrero, Love Machine,



Ron Skoler

Photo Mike Lano

Fuerza Guerrera, Perro Aguayo, and either El Santo or La Parka.

Keller: What do you think of Psicosis?

Konnan: He's not in their league yet. Into Mexico I brought Psicosis, Torero, Rey Mysterio Jr., Love Machine, and Black Magic. Black Magic Norman Smiley is over with Arena Mexico. Psicosis looks spectacular when you see him on TV, but when you work with him in the ring, he's not ready yet. He's still kind of wild and kind of stiff.

Keller: How about Rey Mysterio Jr.?

Konnan: He's wild, not stiff. It will be hard for him to ever become like those guys because he will always be wrestling smaller people, but within his weight division, he is one of the best five workers.

Keller: How would you compare the top few minis with the top full-sized wrestlers?

Konnan: I worked in Singapore teaming with Mascara Sagrada against Cheetah Kid Tom Petty, who I have a lot of respect for, and Espectrito. I got a chance to work with them. We did some comedy spots. They're on the same level relatively. Espectrito and Jerrito Estrada are just as good as any other wrestlers in the world. They are incredible, believe me. Jerrito and Espectrito and Octagoncito and Mascara, if they were normal size, they would be something else. They are something else anyway.

Keller: What are your personal thoughts on Antonio Pena?

Konnan: His only downfall is that he's too nice of a guy sometimes. He's just too nice. He lets too many people get away with too many things. He should be more disciplined. He should even be more disciplined with me because sometimes I get out of control. He's just too nice of a guy. He's definitely—and I use this word very strongly, I use this word for certain people like Vince McMahon and Onita—he is without a doubt a genius. He's a visionary. He isn't limited by other people's criticism, by societies taboos, or by his own imagination. His ideas and dreams are endless and boundless. He's an innovator. He's a revolutionary. He's a rebel. He's an honest, honest, super honest man. I don't say this because I think he's going to read it. He doesn't read English. He's awesome.

He's talked to the government of India because we are supposedly going to bring wrestling there on a very wide scale. That's a country with a population over a billion with an economy getting stronger. What he's done, since we're going in there with the government's and Televisa's blessing, is get a couple of guys who haven't gotten over in Mexico but are very good workers and they're dark skinned and he's said that they're Indian.

So he's been giving them a lot of publicity here in Mexico so when we go to India he has about four stars who are "Indian," plus us, he's just not limited. He's hit the United States, now he's going to India. We're going to Japan. He just doesn't stop. He's creative. He's writing a script for a movie with me. He's just a very smart guy.

Keller: What about Ron Skoler?

Konnan: I was very upset and I was deeply hurt by all the comments he made about me in the *Torch*. I feel he was mad at the time and I was mad at him. I would like to think that a lot of the things he said were out of anger and he didn't mean a lot of them. But I will touch upon two points. He called me and said he wanted to meet Antonio Pena and he wanted to start with AAA. I was very moved by his determination. Darryl Brooks, one of his partners, even told me, "I would not have gotten into AAA if it wasn't for you. You convinced me. I wanted to believe Skoler, but you convinced me." I was the guy who helped all this get together. I was the translator. I just told him, "Don't ever stab me in the back." He even told me, "I'll pay you extra for helping me or I'll give you the belt." I said, "I don't want anything, just your friendship."

Then he brought Vamp in. I told him I didn't want to work with that guy. A lot of the wrestlers I was trying to raid from Arena Mexico he would tell them we were about to go under water. He did everything to block a lot of my efforts. So when he brought him in, I felt I was double-crossed. He tried to get me stripped of the heavyweight title. He tried to get me no longer on any shows. He did something that was very funny. He wanted to give Latin Lover a push. He thinks bodybuilder wrestlers are interchangeable. You don't just take Konnan, a guy who's got all these years on top, and has done so much and just because another guy's got a physique and because some girls scream when he does a stripper gimmick, he thinks he's gonna take my place. That was stupid.

Ultimate Warrior leaves the WWF. You put in a guy who's got more experience than him, who has a nicer physique now than Ultimate Warrior, who has a history in WCW, Lex Luger—has he been as big of a success? No. That's what I'm getting back to. He thought Latin Lover was maybe better looking so he's got to be better than Konnan. I didn't get over on my looks. I really didn't get over on my physique. My physique was helpful. There were a lot of other things. Being at the right place at the right time. My feuds, my charisma. Just a lot of things. I thought to myself it wasn't a very smart move.

I called him and we hashed everything out. I want to say that he is my friend again. I was very hurt by what he said. One thing in particular that I was hurt about is when he said, "Well, I don't want people to think my whole promotion is

based around a chemically enhanced wrestler." Well, that chemically enhanced wrestler has made you money. Number two, he said he was going to start steroid testing. If you start steroid testing, you have to remember Vamp's on it, Machine's on it, Eddy's on it. You've got half the guys on it. And if they're going to go steroid testing, why don't they do cocaine testing also. Then you have nobody wrestling for you. That's just a fact of life. I just thought that was not a very intelligent comment on his part. Why point the finger at me? Because he's mad at me? His excuse was, "You can't tell when guys are on cocaine in the ring, but you can tell if they're on steroids." I said, "You can tell that. Not everybody else. There are kids who probably think my physique is like that." Here's my other argument. "Because you can't tell a guy's smoked marijuana or cocaine, that justifies you not testing him? It's still illegal." I just felt those comments were done in a wanton and reckless manner. I thought it was all out of anger. Why just point the finger at me when other guys are taking steroids. Maybe I've used them wiser or gotten more out of it than the other guys have.

Keller: In reality, what percentage of the top AAA guys use illegal drugs regularly?

Konnán: I would say more guys in the middle of the card than the guys on top. I would say it's lower than in the United States because a lot of them don't make as much money so they can't afford it. I would say all in all talking about cocaine and marijuana it is 60 percent. Steroids I would say half the promotion.

Keller: Is there something about the lifestyle where wrestlers feel they need these drugs or is it just the socially accepted norm?

Konnán: I've analyzed that question myself. I would say for the young guys it's the thing to do and they want to copy the older guys. And I think for the older guys it's the wear and tear of the road, the jetlag, the partying from the night before, and you don't get enough sleep, something to help you forget you're away from your family or you're going through a divorce. So you take some sedatives, pain relievers, you take sleeping pills or cocaine. I have nothing against that. I just don't like to wrestle a guy who's just blitzed when he gets into the ring. The workrate comes down and I feel I have to be protecting myself at all times.

Usually, I'm very cold about this. If somebody comes into the ring and they're drunk or too high, I will do everything to destroy him. I feel it's disrespectful to me. But I just almost feel there is this big stigma attached to steroids and it's gotten a bad rap. It's been a media frenzy. I don't know anybody who's died from it. I don't know what's so bad about it. Everybody does something that's bad for their body or that's illegal. Everybody's got some social ill. It's unfair to come in and go, "Oh,

Konnán, we're all pure and you use steroids. Big f---n' deal. I don't think I'm hurting anybody, I'm not killing anybody. Why don't you go worry about assassins or politicians who we vote into office who steal from us or our local priest molesting the altar boy?

Keller: As a role model, do you at least owe it to the people who follow you to let them know what those personal demons are that directly affect your job or the way you look?

Konnán: Sometimes, unfortunately, you have to lie to the people because people sometimes don't understand the whole steroid thing. You can't sit down and explain it to everybody and expect everybody to understand it. I know that it's nothing bad. You may say that's how an alcoholic talks. But how many guys that are on 'roids go on the street and kill other people. How many alcohol related deaths are there? A lot. So one guy in England killed his girlfriend and another guy went into roid rage. Let's get two guys and magnify and throw everything out of sequence and out of context, but let's not look at all of the thousands and thousands of people who lose their sons, brothers, husbands to some f---in' jerk who was driving drunk or some guy who was free-basing on cocaine. Those things lead to death. 'Roids don't.

Keller: That being said, do you think steroids should be legalized in the United States and Japan?

Konnán: That's a tough question. I think that doctors who know about steroids like sports medicine doctors should administer them to athletes so they know it's being done safely and they're monitored.

It's just come to the point, Wade, where if you just go out into the sun or if you're in a tanning bed you can get sun cancer, if you eat too much pork or too much cholesterol you can get heart disease, second hand smoke can give you lung cancer, using the cellular phone can give you leukemia, living too close to power lines can give you cancer, the carcinogens in the air damage your lungs, if you have sex you can get AIDS. I'm gonna die from something, so what's the big deal. I can't be worried about everything because you'll drive yourself crazy. That's just life.

Keller: How much longer do you want to be in wrestling.

Konnán: My dream is to make movies in Mexico and become maybe the Arnold Schwarzenegger of Mexico or get into American TV and become one of the few Hispanic actors that make it. I would love to get into one of those HBO made-for-TV movies or maybe now that we're working with Turner, I would love to do a movie with Turner Entertainment and become a Hispanic star—not just for Hispanics, but kind of the guy everybody likes. Jose Canseco ain't that

My dream is to make movies in Mexico and become maybe the Arnold Schwarzenegger of Mexico or get into American TV and become one of the few Hispanic actors that make it.

likeable. More like when Dezi Arnez was with Lucy on TV and everybody liked him. I would like to get into TV or movies. I like that. I'm a ham for that.

I would like to make movies with positive messages for kids. I feel if you tell a kid, "Hey, don't use a gun, don't use a gun, don't use a gun" or "Don't use drugs, don't use drugs, don't use drugs," they're gonna do it anyway because they're tired of everywhere they go hearing not to use something. That's just kids' nature. Tell them not to jump on the bed, they'll jump on it. But, what happens Wade, if in a movie if my little brother gets a gun and by mistake shoots his sister, the kids might go, "Whoa! That could happen to me." Or if in a movie you show two best friends and you show that one of them overdoses on drugs. It would be kind of like a hidden messages for the youth. I would like to make movies with positive messages for the youth. I'd like to be the Arnold Schwarzenegger of Mexico and make action movies, but with messages, not just killing for killing's sake or get into American TV and be a Hispanic actor. There's very few. There's Paul Rodriguez, who I think's a piece of s---. But I like guys like Jimmy Smits, Raul Julia. There's really not that many. I just feel that I want to go back to the United States, but my money's here right now. I just love the United States and I think it's the greatest place. If I can get out of wrestling and get into movies and TV, that's what I would like to do.

Keller: Do you think your honesty and bluntness ever gets you in trouble or is that a policy you would recommend to everybody else?

Konnán: I think everybody should be, but that's wishing for too much. Most people aren't like that. It gets me in a lot of trouble. It's labelled me in Mexico from everything from a big mouth to conceited to stirring up trouble to actually getting me in fights. I would rather have people know they are dealing with a straight shooter than a guy that you don't know

I love being a wrestler. I love the whole persona. I like getting into character and dressing up and being like a celebrity. All that to me is fun. I like being in the ring with people who are great workers and making people believe we're beating the s— out of one another.

what the f— he's telling you half the time. I just don't care. I'm only gonna live once and I'm gonna live it the way I want, so I'd rather tell the people how I feel and how it is, you know. I've also learned it's not always the best policy. Sometimes you have to be diplomatic, sometimes you do have to hide stuff under the rug. I do it to protect either myself or my business. If I was totally honest, I would go out and tell everybody, "Hey, wrestling's fake, but I'd be shooting myself in the foot." So, if it's for a reason like that, then I won't tell the truth. I don't bother nobody, I just don't want to be bothered.

One of the reasons I want to get out of wrestling is because to me it's got a lot of unsavory characters. There are a lot of people who are jealous because it's a sport where the best aren't necessarily on top, only the people who sell tickets are on top.

Keller: Which makes the best in a sense?

Konnan: Yeah, but it makes them the best at selling tickets, not the best wrestlers. So when you have wrestlers who are better wrestling-wise than the guys who are on top who have the charisma or the luck, then it breeds a lot of jealousy. It's a very, very, very jealous sport, a lot of backstabbing. I hate that. I hate a lot of times being with the boys because they're all bullsh--ers. "Oh, hey Konnan, how you doin'. You look great." Then I turn around and they say, "Hey, f— him." So that's why a lot of times people say, "Konnan doesn't look like a very nice guy, he doesn't talk." I just don't want to talk to nobody a lot of the times because I feel I'm wasting my time.

Keller: Are you good friends with very many people in the wrestling business or do

you try to limit yourself to being cordial and having acquaintances?

Konnan: Yeah, cordial and acquaintances. A lot of people have been able to dupe me at the beginning that they're a nice guy and then later on I'd find out what they're really like. So a lot of times I don't even want to go through that.

Keller: Do you have a most memorable moment so far in your career?

Konnan: There's a couple. When I signed my name to a WWF contract; when I was on a pay-per-view for WCW and I saw myself from Mexico on cable TV; when I beat Perro Aguayo for his hair because he's the biggest legend in Mexico right now; when I stood in the middle of the (Los Angeles) Sports Arena knowing we had drawn 17,000 in the building and turned 8,000 away and I actually said to myself, "How do you like me now, Vince McMahon?"

When I got my first part in a soap opera and saw myself on TV with other actors. I don't know of any kid who hasn't dreamed of being in a movie or on TV or being in a concert. Another highlight was when I was on TV actually signing a rap song on the number one music show in Mexico. Things like that stand out. I just go, "F—, this has been incredible."

I'll tell you one thing, I will say this, I love—I mean I adore—being a wrestler. The only thing I don't like is the bulls— around it. The travelling, getting somewhere when there's no transportation or no hotels, having to deal with unsavory characters as I mentioned before, but the whole thing of coming out on the cover of a magazine or being in a soap opera, being in an airport and then saying, "Hey, come to the front of the line" just because I'm Konnan or "Hey, the meals free on us" or getting gifts from fans or just having some girl come up to you and say, "Hey, rock my world because I love the way you wrestle." All those things, those are the benefits. I love all that s—. I love being a wrestler. I love the whole persona. I like getting into character and dressing up and being like a celebrity. All that to me is fun. I like being in the ring with people who are great workers and making people believe we're beating the s— out of one another and if they really knew we hardly didn't touch each other harder than a little tap, they would probably go bonkers.

Keller: Do you strive to be respected or do you strive for adulation from the masses? Would you rather be respected by a few or admired for a variety of reasons linked not to who you are but to your persona?

Konnan: Yeah, that. I'm kind of like Hogan. Hogan, I don't think was ever really respected by the wrestlers. Even though he was in the AWA which was a tough territory, he was never really respected by the other wrestlers but he had all this adulation. For the longest time I learned how to do all these shoot moves and I wrestled with all these old teachers who knew shoot moves and all that. But I never earned the

respect of the wrestlers. And you know what, I never will. There's this big thing that will always be in my way and people like Hogan's way and that's the jealousy. I have forgotten about trying to get over with the boys anymore. I really don't give a damn. People say, "Hey you gotta work with them every night so you have to get along with them." I don't give a damn. When they get in the ring, they know I'm money so they gotta work with me. I care more about the adulation of the fans because they're the ones who pay the tickets and they're the ones I really care about anyway. It's hard to change the boys. They've got their own mindset and I don't care.

Keller: Do you want the respect of the fans or their adulation?

Konnan: Their adulation. I don't really care about their respect.

Keller: Any subjects I didn't ask about that you wanted to bring up?

Konnan: I would like to say two things. I'm very, very happy. When I first read the *Observer* about five years ago, I thought, my god, I can't believe somebody is doing this. Now I'm glad it was done. It has not in any way hurt the sport. In a way it's actually made people respect the sport more. They find a lot of it interesting that they didn't know before. Even though it exposes it before to some new fans, they still respect it because they know in the ring there are really feuds, that we actually do fight in the dressing room. I can't go a week not reading about what's going on in my business.

I think there should be more interviews with wrestlers. Especially guys who talk how it is. I loved the Billy Graham interview. People like Paul E. Dangerously and Jim Cornette, outspoken people, are great. Maybe Vince McMahon has come down off of his "I hate newsletters" thing because I have personally seen newsletters on his desk, so I know he reads them. That's my favorite part, reading interviews.

Finally, I would just like to say, I don't know what people have heard about me or haven't heard about me. But for the record, I'm just the type of guy who doesn't f— with nobody and I don't want to be f—ed with and I want to try to make our sport respectable. If I can help it by turning heel or turning face or having to bleed or whatever I have to do for the sport, I'll do it because this sport has given me a lot. There are a lot of petty jealousies by promoters and wrestler and a lot of things that are around it that I don't like. In essence, I think most wrestlers try to be nice guys, but it's hard to be a nice guy when you've got so many pricks around you. You've got to almost be protecting yourself. Thank you for having me as one of your subjects. Hopefully this will be enlightening for everybody and they'll get to know a little bit more about me and the way I think.

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Major Events in the United States

WWF Royal Rumble

Jan. 22—Pay-Per-View

Providence, R.I.—Civic Center

Tatanka pinned Bam Bam Bigelow at 8:10 (**3/4). The Quebecers (Jacques & Pierre) defeated Bret & Owen Hart to retain the WWF Tag Team Titles at 16:22 (***). Razor Ramon pinned I.R.S. to retain the Intercontinental Title at 11:30 (*3/4). Yokozuna defeated Undertaker to retain the WWF Title at 14:09 (***). Bret Hart and Lex Luger were declared co-winners of the Royal Rumble at 55:44 (order of elimination: Samu, Rick Steiner, Bart Gunn, Scott Steiner, Owen Hart, Kwang, Bob Backlund, Billy Gunn, Virgil, Jeff Jarrett, Randy Savage, Doink, Diesel, Mabel, Kabuki, Crush, Sparky Plugg, Greg Valentine, Adam Bomb, Mo, Tatanka, Bam Bam Bigelow, Marty Jannetty, Tenryu, and Fatu).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 0.9 (\$2.3 million); live attendance 14,500 sellout (\$160,000); *Torch* poll results 5.1, Undertaker vs. Yokozuna (best), I.R.S. vs. Ramon (worst).

WCW Clash of the Champions

Jan. 27—Live TBS Special

Baton Rouge, La.—Centroplex

Too Cold Scorpio & Marcus Bagwell beat Paul Orndorff & Paul Roma at 12:38 (***). Ron Simmons pinned Ice Train at 3:36 (1/4*). Lord Steven Regal fought Dustin Rhodes to a 15 minute draw in a WCW TV Title match (*1/4). Cactus Jack & Maxx Payne defeated The Nasty Boys in a non-title match at 6:18 (**). Brian Pillman pinned Col. Robert Parker at 5:55 (*1/2). Sting & Ric Flair defeated Rick Rude & Vader at 22:32 (***1/4).

Statistics: TV rating: 3.5; Live attendance 3,200 (2,000 paid, \$21,000); *Torch* poll results 5.3, Sting & Flair vs. Rude & Vader (best), Simmons vs. Train (worst).

ECW The Night the Line Was Crossed

Feb. 5

Philadelphia, Pa.—ECW Arena

911 beat Chad Austin, Mr. Hughes beat Sal Bellomo, Sandman & Tommy Cairo beat Pitbull Spike & Rockin Rebel, The Public Enemy (Johnny Grunge & Flyboy Rocco Rock) beat The Bruise Brothers, Jimmy Snuka beat Tommy Dreamer, The Sheik & Pat Tanaka beat Sullivan & Tazmaniac, J.T. Smith beat Mike Awesome, and Terry Funk & Sabu & Shane Douglas fought to a 60 minute draw (****3/4).

Statistics: Live attendance 900 (sellout, approx. \$10,000).

SMW Sunday Bloody Sunday

Feb. 13—All-Time High Attendance Mark

Knoxville, Tenn.—Knoxville Coliseum

Anthony Michaels beat The Hornet, Chris Candido defeated Tracy Smothers (*1/2), Doug & Mike Furnas beat The Heavenly Bodies (*1/2), The Rock & Roll Express beat The Heavenly Bodies via DQ (*3/4), Dirty White Boy defeated Brian Lee to capture the SMW Title (***3/4), The Bruise Brothers defeated The Moondogs in a cage match (**3/4), and Bob Armstrong defeated Terry Funk(**).

Statistics: Live attendance 4,000 (largest SMW crowd in history, \$31,800).

WCW SuperBrawl

Feb. 20—Pay-Per-View

Albany, Ga.—The Civic Center

Harlem Heat defeated Thunder & Lightning at 9:39 (*3/4), "Jungle" Jim Steele beat The Equalizer at 6:29 (DUD), Terry Taylor pinned Diamond Dallas Page at 11:48 (*1/4), Johnny B. Badd defeated Jimmy Garvin at 10:45 (*1/4), Lord Steven Regal pinned Arn Anderson at 27:28 (*3/4), The Nasty Boys defeated Maxx Payne & Cactus Jack at 12:12 (**1/2), Brian Pillman & Sting & Dustin Rhodes defeated Steve Austin & Rick Rude & Paul Orndorff at 14:04 (***1/4), and Ric Flair defeated Vader via submission at 11:30 (**3/4).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 0.5 (\$1.3 million); live attendance 7,600 sellout (4,217 paid, \$39,000) *Torch* poll results 4.7, Flair vs. Vader (best), Steele vs. Equalizer (worst).

USWA Monday Night Memories

Mar. 7—Highest Attendance Mark in Years

Memphis, Tenn.—Mid-South Coliseum

The Nightmares (Ken Wayne & Danny Davis) & Skull Von Crush defeated King Cobra & Spellbinder & Jeff Gaylord (1/2*), J.C. Ice fought Wolfie D to a DCO at 8:12 (**), Koko B. Ware pinned Billy Joe Travis at 9:24 (**), Tommy Rich pinned Jimmy Valiant by DQ (1/4*), The Moondogs (mgd. by Ronnie Lotz) defeated Dr. Frank & Leatherface at 2:24 (DUD), Jerry Lawler & Austin Idol & Brian Christopher beat Eddie & Doug Gilbert & Terry Funk via DQ (***), Jerry Lawler won a Best of Memphis Survival Match (outlasting Eddie Gilbert, Doug Gilbert, Funk, Idol, Rich, Christopher, Moondog Spot, Ware, Valiant).

Statistics: Live attendance 8,377 (\$32,000).

Ultimate Fight Championship II

Mar. 11—Pay-Per-View

Denver, Co.—Mammoth Gardens

Royce Gracie beat Minoki Ichihara at 5:06, Patrick Smith beat Scott Morris at 0:21, Johnny Rhodes beat Fred Etish at 3:08, Renco Paradel beat Orlando Weit at 1:26, Gracie beat Jason DiLucia at 1:02, Smith beat Rhodes at 1:05, Gracie beat Parduel at 1:29, and Gracie beat Smith to win his second straight UFC Title at 1:16.

Statistics: Est. buyrate: 0.5 (\$740,000); live attendance 2,000 sellout; no *Torch* poll taken.

AAA/IWC

Mar. 12

Los Angeles, Calif.—Sports Arena

Tim Patterson & Killer Blond & Super Rabbit beat Chavo & Mando & Hector Guerrero via DQ, Los Payasos Azul & Rojo & Amarillo beat Misterioso & Torero & Mascara Sagrada via DQ, Espectro & Fuerza Guerrera & Jerry Estrada beat Rey Misterio Jr. & Heavy Metal & Winners, Mascarita Sagrada beat Espectrito, Octagon & El Hijo del Santo & Lizmark beat Love Machine & Psicosis & La Parka, and Konnan beat Jake Roberts.

Statistics: Live attendance 13,852 (\$238,595).

WWF Wrestlemania X

Mar. 20—Pay-Per-View

New York, N.Y.—Madison Square Garden

Owen Hart pinned Bret Hart at 20:21 (****1/4), Bam Bam Bigelow & Luna Vachon defeated Doink & Dink at 6:09 (*3/4), Randy Savage defeated Crush in a falls count anywhere match at 9:49 (**1/2), Alundra Blayze pinned Lelani Kai at 3:20 (*), Men on a Mission

defeated The Quebecers via CO at 7:41 (**), Yokozuna defeated Lex Luger via DQ at 14:40 to retain the WWF Title, Earthquake pinned Adam Bomb at 0:35, Razor Ramon defeated Shawn Michaels at 18:44 of a ladder match (****), and Bret Hart pinned Yokozuna to capture the WWF Title at 10:28 (***).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 1.7 (\$5.2 million); live attendance 18,065 (\$960,000); *Torch* poll results 7.5, Michaels vs. Ramon (best), Earthquake vs. Bomb (worst).

WCW SPRING STAMPEDE

Apr. 17—Pay-Per-View

Chicago, Ill.—Rosemont Horizon

Johnny B. Badd pinned Diamond Dallas Page at 5:55 (**), Lord Seven Regal fought Brian Pillman to a draw at 15:00 to retain the WCW TV Title (***1/4), The Nasty Boys beat Cactus Jack & Maxx Payne at 8:54 (***3/4), Steve Austin beat Great Muta via top rope DQ at 16:20 to retain the U.S. Hvt. Title (*1/2), Sting pinned Rick Rude at 12:50 to capture the WCW International Title (**), Bunkhouse Buck beat Dustin Rhodes at 14:11 in a "bunkhouse rules" match (**3/4), Vader pinned The Boss at 9:02 (***), and Ric Flair beat Rick Steamboat at 32:23 to retain the WCW Title (***).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 0.5 (\$1.3 million); live attendance 12,200 (9,000 paid, \$107,000); *Torch* poll results 7.0, Jack & Payne vs. Nastys (best), Page vs. Badd (worst).

WCW Slamboree

May 22—Pay-Per-View

Philadelphia, Pa.—Civic Center

Steve Austin pinned Johnny B. Badd to retain the U.S. Hvt. Title at 16:10, Terry Funk fought Tully Blanchard to a DDQ at 7:10 (*), Larry Zbyszko pinned Steven Regal at 11:30 (**), Dustin Rhodes pinned Bunkhouse Buck at 12:45 (**), Ric Flair pinned Barry Windham at 13:26 to retain the WCW Hvt. Title (***), and Kevin Sullivan & Cactus Jack defeated The Nasty Boys at 9:41 to capture the WCW Tag Team Titles (****1/2).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 0.5 (\$1.2 million); live attendance 4,000 (2,700 paid, \$53,000); *Torch* poll results: 7.3, Jack & Sullivan vs. Nastys (best), Regal vs. Zbyszko (worst).

WWF King of the Ring

June 19—Pay-Per-View

Baltimore, Md.—Baltimore Arena

Razor Ramon pinned Bam Bam Bigelow at 8:21(*), I.R.S. pinned Mabel at 5:29 (1/2*), Owen Hart pinned Tatanka at 8:17 (**), 1-2-3 Kid pinned Jeff Jarrett at 4:36 (**3/4), Diesel beat Bret Hart via DQ so Hart retained the WWF Title at 22:58 (***1/2), Razor Ramon pinned I.R.S. at 5:09 (*1/4), Owen Hart defeated Kid via submission at 3:33 (**3/4), The Head Shrinkers beat Yokozuna & Crush at 9:16 (**), Owen Hart pinned Ramon at 6:32 to win the King of the Ring Tournament (**), Roddy Piper pinned Jerry Lawler at 11:08 (*).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 0.7 (\$1.85 million); live attendance 12,000 sellout (\$170,000); *Torch* poll results 5.1, Diesel vs. Hart (best), I.R.S. vs. Mabel (worst).

WCW Clash of the Champions

June 23—Live TBS Special

Charleston, S.C.—Charleston Coliseum

Cactus Jack & Kevin Sullivan defeated The Nasty

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Boys at 10:40 to retain the WCW Tag Team Titles (**), The Guardian Angel pinned Tex Slazenger (3/4*), Steven Regal defeated Larry Zbyszko at 9:26 (**1/4), Steve Austin fought Johnny B. Badd to a no-decision and thus Austin retained the U.S. Title (**), Ric Flair pinned Sting to capture the WCW International Title and unify it with the WCW World Hvt. Title at 17:14 (**1/4).

Statistics: Live attendance 6,700 (4,000 paid, \$42,000); TV rating 3.0; *Torch* poll results 5.7, Flair vs. Sting (best), Angel vs. Slazenger (worst).

WCW Bash at the Beach

July 17—Pay-Per-View

Orlando, Fla.—Orlando Arena

Steven Regal beat Johnny B. Badd at 10:47 (**), Vader beat The Guardian Angel by DQ at 8:05 (**3/4), Bunkhouse Buck & Terry Funk defeated Dustin Rhodes & Arn Anderson at 11:33 (**), Steve Austin defeated Rick Steamboat to retain the U.S. Hvt. Title at 20:06 (**3/4), Pretty Wonderful (Paul Orndorff & Paul Roma) defeated Cactus Jack & Kevin Sullivan to capture the WCW Tag Team Titles at 20:20 (*1/2), and Hulk Hogan pinned Ric Flair at 21:53 to capture the WCW Hvt. Title (****).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 1.0 (\$2.58 million); live attendance 14,000 sellout (9,111 paid, \$140,000); *Torch* reader poll 6.3, Flair vs. Hogan (best), Badd vs. Regal (worst).

SMW Night of the Legends

Aug. 5—All-Time High Attendance Mark
Knoxville, Tenn.—Knoxville Coliseum

"Connan" Chris Walker pinned Richard Slinger (*), Doug Furnas beat Killer Kyle (*1/2), Dick Slater & Bob Orton Jr. fought Ron Garvin & The Mongolian Stomper to a DDQ, Dirty White Boy defeated Terry Gordy by DQ to retain the SMW Hvt. Title, The Rock & Roll Express defeated Brian Lee & Chris Candido (**3/4), The Thrill Seekers beat The Heavenly Bodies (**1/2), and Bob Armstrong & Tracy Smothers & Road Warrior Hawk beat Dory Funk Jr. & Terry Funk & Bruiser Bedlam (****).

Statistics: Live attendance 5,000 (4,000 paid, \$40,000).

WCW Clash of the Champions

Aug. 24—Live TBS Special

Cedar Rapids, Iowa—Five Seasons Center

The Nasty Boys beat Pretty Wonderful at 9:33 in a non-title match (*), Rick Steamboat pinned Steve Austin at 16:02 to capture the U.S. Hvt. Title (***), Dusty & Dustin Rhodes beat Terry Funk & Bunkhouse Buck by DQ (*), Antonio Inoki defeated Steven Regal at 8:26 (1/2*), and Ric Flair beat Hulk Hogan via countout at 14:26 so Hogan retained the WCW Title (****).

Statistics: TV rating 4.5; live attendance 4,200 (3,400 paid, \$40,000); *Torch* reader poll 6.8, Steamboat vs. Austin (best), Regal vs. Inoki (worst).

WWF SummerSlam

Aug. 29—Pay-Per-View

Chicago, Ill.—United Center

I.R.S. & Bam Bam Bigelow beat The Head Shrinkers by DQ at 6:45 (**), Razor Ramon pinned Diesel to capture the Intercontinental Title at 13:55 (***), Tatanka pinned Lex Luger at 6:00 (**), Jeff Jarrett pinned Mabel at 5:45 (*), Bret Hart beat Owen Hart in a cage match to retain the WWF Title at 32:17 (***), and Undertaker (Mark Calloway) defeated The Imposter Undertaker (Brian Lee) at 8:57.

Statistics: Est. buyrate 1.3 (\$3.56 million); live

attendance 23,000 sellout (19,500 paid, \$386,000); *Torch* reader poll 5.4, Owen vs. Bret (best), Undertaker vs. Undertaker (worst).

Ultimate Fight Championship III

Sept. 9—Pay-Per-View

Charlotte, N.C.

Keith Hackney beat Emmanuel Yarborough at 1:57, Ken Shamrock beat Christophe Leninger at 4:48, Harold Howard beat Roland Payne at 0:45, Royce Gracie beat Kimo Leopoldo at 4:40, Shamrock beat Felix Lee Mitchell at 4:36, Steve Jenum beat Howard at 1:27 to win the tournament.

Statistics: Est. buyrate 0.7 (\$975,000); live attendance 2,000 sellout; no *Torch* poll taken.

WCW Fall Brawl

Sept. 18—Pay-Per-View

Roanoke, Va.

Johnny B. Badd pinned Steven Regal to capture the TV Title at 10:57 (**3/4), Kevin Sullivan pinned Cactus Jack at 6:05 so Jack had to leave WCW (**1/4), Hacksaw Duggan pinned Steve Austin at 0:10 to capture the U.S. Hvt. Title (no rating), Pretty Wonderful beat Stars & Stripes at 13:00 to retain the WCW Tag Team Titles (*), Vader pinned Guardian Angel at 6:10 (**), Vader pinned Sting (**3/4), and Dusty & Dustin Rhodes & The Nasty Boys beat Col. Robert Parker & Bunkhouse Buck & Terry Funk to win WarGames at 19:07 (***).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 0.5 (\$1.39 million); live attendance 6,500 (5,200 paid, \$61,000); *Torch* reader poll 5.9, Sting vs. Vader (best), Austin vs. Duggan (worst).

UWF Blackjack Brawl

Sept. 23—Live SportsChannel Special

Las Vegas, Nev.—MGM Grand Hotel

Dan Spivey (w/Missy Hyatt) beat Johnny Ace (*1/2), Jack Armstrong pinned Mando Guerrero to win the UWF Jr. Hvt. Title at 4:24 (*1/4), Sunny Beach pinned Dr. Feelgood at 5:24 (*), Hellraiser Thor (Tony Halme) fought Bob Orton Jr. to a DCO at 5:16 (*1/2), Little Tokyo pinned The Karate Kid at 7:07 to capture the UWF Midget Title (*), Sampson pinned The Irish Assassin at 4:30, Tyler Maine (a/k/a Big Sky) pinned Stevie Ray at 6:27 to capture the MGM Grand Title, Candy Devine pinned Tino Moretti at 3:24 to win the UWF Ladies Title, The Killer Bees (B. Brian Blair & Jim Brunzell) beat Warlord & Power Warrior at 11:30 to win the UWF Tag Team Titles (*1/2), Superfly Snuka fought Cactus Jack to a DCO at 8:14 in a lumberjack match, and "Dr. Death" Steve Williams beat Sid Vicious by DQ at 10:45 to retain the UWF World Title (**).

Statistics: Sparse crowd of hundreds... No TV ratings available... Listed only because of national TV coverage...

WCW Halloween Havoc

Oct. 23—Pay-Per-View

Detroit, Mich.—Joe Louis Arena

Johnny B. Badd fought Honky Tonk Man to a 10 minute draw so Badd retained the WCW TV Title (DUD), Pretty Wonderful defeated Stars & Stripes to capture the WCW Tag Team Titles at 12:43 (**1/4), Dave Sullivan beat Kevin Sullivan via countout at 5:15 (1/4*), Dustin Rhodes pinned Arn Anderson at 9:47 (**1/2), Hacksaw Duggan beat Steve Austin by DQ at 8:05 (**), Vader pinned Guardian Angel at 8:09 (*3/4), The Nasty Boys beat Terry Funk & Bunkhouse Buck (*3/4), and Hulk Hogan pinned Ric Flair to retain the WCW Hvt. Title and force Flair to retire from wrestling

at 19:24 (**1/2).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 1.0 (\$2.50 million); live attendance 14,000 (8,959 paid, \$189,000); *Torch* reader poll 4.7, Flair vs. Hogan (best), Dave Sullivan vs. Kevin Sullivan (worst).

AAA/IWC When Worlds Collide

Nov. 6—Pay-Per-View

Los Angeles, Calif.—Sports Arena

Octagoncito & Mascarita Sagrada beat Jerrito Estrada & Espectrito at 8:26 (**1/2), Psicosis & Fuerza Guerrera & "Madonna's Boyfriend" Louie Spicolli beat Rey Misterio Jr. & Heavy Metal & Latin Lover (****), Chris Benoit & Tito Santana & Too Cold Scorpio beat Blue Panther & La Parka & Jerry Estrada at 14:38 (**3/4), El Hijo del Santo & Octagon beat "Love Machine" Art Barr & Eddy Guerrero (****3/4), and Perro Aguayo beat Konnan in a cage match at 17:54 (***).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 0.24 (\$400,000); live attendance 13,500 (12,024 paid, \$202,465); *Torch* reader poll 7.9, Machine & Guerrero vs. Octagon & Santo (best), Konnan vs. Aguayo (worst).

WCW Clash of the Champions

Nov. 16—Live TBS Special

Jacksonville, Fla.—Jacksonville Coliseum

Stars & Stripes beat Pretty Wonderful at 9:20 to capture the WCW Tag Team Titles (***), Johnny B. Badd beat Honky Tonk Man via DQ to retain the WCW TV Title at 6:10 (*1/4), Harlem Heat beat The Nasty Boys at 10:36 (*1/2), Vader pinned Dustin Rhodes at 11:43 (**3/4), Hacksaw Duggan beat Steve Austin by DQ at 0:54, and Hulk Hogan & Sting & Dave Sullivan beat Kevin Sullivan & Avalanche & Butcher when Hogan pinned Kevin Sullivan at 10:55 (**).

Statistics: TV rating 3.6; live attendance 4,000 (3,200 paid, \$38,000); *Torch* reader poll 4.2, Vader vs. Rhodes (best), Duggan vs. Austin (worst).

WWF Survivor Series

Nov. 23—Pay-Per-View

San Antonio, Tex.—Freeman Coliseum

Razor Ramon & 1-2-3 Kid & British Bulldog & The Head Shrinkers (Fatu & Seonne) beat Diesel & Shawn Michaels & Owen Hart & Jim Neidhart & Jeff Jarrett at 21:38 (**1/4), Jerry Lawler & Queasy & Sneezey & Cheesy beat Doink & Dink & Pink & Wink at 16:08 (*1/4), Bob Backlund beat Bret Hart at 35:11 to capture the WWF Title when Helen Hart, Bret's mother, threw in the towel (**1/2), Lex Luger & Mabel & The Smoking Gunns beat Tatanka & King Kong Bundy & The Heavenly Bodies at 23:21 (**1/2), and Undertaker beat Yokozuna at 15:03 in a casket match (**3/4).

Statistics: Est. buyrate 0.9 (\$2.32 million); live attendance 10,000 (8,000 paid, \$120,000); *Torch* reader poll 6.8, Hart vs. Backlund (best), Clowns vs. Lawler's team (worst).

Ultimate Fight Championship IV

Dec. 16—Pay-Per-View

Tulsa, Okla.—Expo Square Pavilion

Royce Gracie beat Ron Von Clief at 3:49, Keith Hackney beat Joe Son at 2:42, Steve Jenum beat Melton Bowen at 4:42, Dan Severn beat Anthony Macias at 1:45, Royce Gracie beat Keith Hackney at 5:32, Dan Severn beat Marcus Bossett at 0:49, Guy Mezger beat Jason Fair at 2:13, and Royce Gracie beat Dan Severn at 15:49 to win the tournament.

Statistics: Est. buyrate 1.0 (\$1.86 million); live attendance 5,875 sellout (\$140,000)...

Title Changes

WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION

WWF Champion

Bret Hart defeated Yokozuna (Mar. 20, New York City, N.Y., Wrestlemania X—match ended when Helen Hart, Bret's mother, threw in the towel when Backlund had crossface chicken wing locked on Bret.)

Bob Backlund [3] defeated Bret Hart via submission (Nov. 23, San Antonio, Tex., Survivor Series)

Diesel [1] pinned Bob Backlund (Nov. 26, New York City, N.Y., Madison Square Garden—match lasted only six seconds)

WWF Women's Title

Bull Nakano [1] defeated Alundra Blayze (Nov. 20, Tokyo, Japan, Tokyo Dome, All Japan Women's card)

(*Blayze defeated Heidi Lee Morgan in tournament final for reinstated title on Dec. 13, 1993 in Poughkeepsie, N.Y.)

WWF Intercontinental

Diesel [1] defeated Razor Ramon (Apr. 13, Syracuse, N.Y.)

Razor Ramon [2] pinned Diesel (Aug. 29, Chicago, Ill. SummerSlam)

WWF Tag Team

Marty Jannetty & 1-2-3 Kid defeated The Quebecers (Jacques & Pierre) (Jan. 10, Richmond, Va., Monday Night Raw)

The Quebecers defeated Jannetty & Kid (Jan. 17, New York City, N.Y.)

Men on a Mission (Mabel & Mo) defeated The Quebecers (Mar. 29, London, England)

The Quebecers defeated Men on a Mission (Mar. 31, Sheffield, England)

The Head Shrinkers defeated The Quebecers (Apr. 26, Burlington, Vt.)

Diesel & Shawn Michaels defeated The Head Shrinkers (Aug. 28, Indianapolis, Ind.)

Diesel & Shawn Michaels vacated the titles on Nov. 23 when their partnership was dissolved. The belts were vacant until Jan. 22 at the WWF's Royal Rumble when a tournament final was scheduled.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING

WCW World Heavyweight Champion

Ric Flair defeated Rick Steamboat for the held-up title (Apr. 21, Atlanta, Ga.—title held up same night when Flair handed title to commissioner Nick Bockwinkel because of controversial decision in previous title defense against Vader.)

Hulk Hogan pinned Ric Flair (July 7, Orlando, Fla., Bash at the Beach)

WCW International Heavyweight Title

(formerly NWA World Heavyweight Title)

Hiroshi Hase pinned Rick Rude (Mar. 16, Tokyo, Japan.)

Rick Rude pinned Hase (Mar. 24, Kyoto, Japan)

Sting pinned Rick Rude (Apr. 17, Chicago, Ill.)

Rick Rude pinned Sting (May 1, Fukuoka, Japan)

Rude surrendered title when he quit WCW (Approx. May 18, WCW overrules the May 1 title change and calls match a no-contest, but Sting refuses to accept title again and thus May 22 match was for the held-up title.)

Sting defeated Vader for held-up title (May 22, Philadelphia, Pa., Slamboree)

Ric Flair pinned Sting in a unification match to become the last holder of this title as a separate entity

from the WCW World Hvt. Title (June 23, Charleston, S.C.)

(*Title changed from NWA Title to WCW International Title when WCW seceded from the NWA. By Nov. 4, 1994 the name change was officially in effect.)

WCW United States Heavyweight

Rick Steamboat pinned Steve Austin (Aug. 24, Cedar Rapids, Ia., Clash of the Champions)

Steve Austin beat Steamboat via forfeit (Sept. 18, Roanoke, Va., Fall Brawl—Steamboat unable to wrestle due to back injury)

Hacksaw Duggan pinned Austin (Sept. 18, Roanoke, Va., Fall Brawl—Duggan pinned Austin in 10 seconds following WCW commissioner Nick Bockwinkel ruling that Austin had to immediately defend title he was awarded moments earlier via forfeit.)

Vader defeated Hacksaw Duggan (Dec. 27, Nashville, Tenn., Starrcade)

WCW World Television Champion

Larry Zbyszko pinned Steven Regal (May 3, Atlanta, Ga., Center Stage)

Steven Regal pinned Zbyszko (June 23, Charleston, S.C., Clash of the Champions)

Johnny B. Badd pinned Steve Regal (Sept. 19, Roanoke, Va., Fall Brawl)

WCW World Tag Team Title

Cactus Jack & Kevin Sullivan beat The Nasty Boys (Brian Nobbs & Jerry Sags) (May 22, Philadelphia, Pa., Slamboree)

Pretty Wonderful (Paul Orndorff & Paul Roma) beat Jack & Sullivan (July 17, Orlando, Fla., Bash at the Beach)

Stars & Stripes (Marcus bagwell & The Patriot) beat Pretty Wonderful (Sept. 25, Atlanta, Ga., Center Stage)

Pretty Wonderful beat Stars & Stripes (Oct. 23, Detroit, Mich., Halloween Havoc)

Stars & Stripes beat Pretty Wonderful (Nov. 16, Jacksonville, Fla., Clash of the Champions)

Harlem Heat beat Stars & Stripes (Dec. 8, Atlanta, Ga., Center Stage WCW Saturday Night taping)

UNITED STATES WRESTLING ASSOCIATION

USWA Unified Heavyweight Title

Eddie Gilbert defeated Jerry Lawler (Jan. 31, Memphis, Tenn.)

Jerry Lawler defeated Eddie Gilbert (Feb. 7, Memphis).

Eddie Gilbert beat Lawler (Feb. 14, Memphis)

Jerry Lawler won the title in a phantom title change when Eddie Gilbert left the USWA. The promotion said on the Mar. 26 TV show that the title change took place in Senatobia, Ms. without giving a date.

Sid Vicious defeated Lawler via forfeit (July 16, Memphis—Vicious injured Lawler earlier in the evening so Lawler was unable to defend title in the ring.)

USWA Heavyweight Title

(formerly Southern Title)

Doug Gilbert defeated Brian Christopher (Feb. 7, Memphis, Tenn.)

Brian Christopher beat Doug Gilbert (Feb. 14, Memphis)

Doug Gilbert beat Christopher (Feb. 21, Memphis)

Brian Christopher beat Doug Gilbert (Feb. 28, Memphis)

Eddie Gilbert beat Christopher (Mar. 14, Memphis)

Brian Christopher beat Eddie Gilbert (Mar. 19, Memphis)

Doug Gilbert beat Christopher (Mar. 2, Memphis)

Brian Christopher beat Doug Gilbert (Maty 9, Memphis)

Dream Machine beat Christopher (June 6, Memphis)

Brian Christopher beat Machine (July 11, Memphis)

Doug Gilbert beat Christopher (July 25, Memphis)

Title vacated when Doug Gilbert failed to defend title within 30 days (Sept. 24, Memphis)

Tommy Rich beat Buddy Landel in a tournament final (Oct., 3, Memphis)

Brian Lee beat Tommy Rich (Dec. 5, Memphis)

Far Too Wild (Chris Michaels & Todd Morton beat PG13 (Wolfie D & J.C. Ice) for the held-up titles (Jan. 8, Memphis)

The Bruise Brothers (Ron & Don Bruise) beat Far Too Wild (Jan. 10, Memphis)

The Rock & Roll Express beat The Bruises (Jan. 24, Memphis)

The Moondogs (Spot & Splat) beat The Rock & Roll Express (Jan. 31, Memphis)

Titles vacated after match between Don Bass & Billy Travis and PG13 (Apr. 16, Memphis)

Brian Christopher & Eddie Gilbert won the tag team titles in a phantom tournament victory. The promotion announced on the Apr. 30 show that they won a tournament in Jonesboro, Ak. the previous week.

The Eliminators beat Christopher & Gilbert (May 2, Memphis)

PG13 beat The Eliminators (June 13, Memphis)

Dante & Mephisto beat PG13 for the held up tag titles (Aug. 15, Memphis)

PG13 beat Dante & Mephisto (Aug. 29, Memphis)

The Phantoms defeated PG13 (Louisville, Ky.)

The Moondogs (Rex & Spot) beat The Phantoms (Oct. 24, Memphis)

The Moondogs beat Beauty & The Beast (Ron & Jim Harris) for the held-up titles.

Titles held up after no-contest match with Beauty & The Beast (Nov. 14, Memphis)

SMOKY MOUNTAIN WRESTLING

SMW Heavyweight Title

Brian Lee beat Paul Orndorff via DQ in tournament final (May 22, Knoxville, Tenn.)

Dirty White Boy beat Brian Lee (Aug. 8, Johnson City, Tenn.)

Brian Lee beat Dirty White Boy (July 17, Johnson City, Tenn.)

Dirty White Boy beat Lee in a chain match (Feb. 13, Knoxville, Tenn.)

Jake Roberts beat Dirty White Boy (May 2, Harriman, Tenn.)

Dirty White Boy was awarded the title (July 5, Warrensville, N.C.—Roberts no-showed several dates in a row, portrayed on TV as a title change in Warrensville, N.C.)

SMW Television "Beat the Champ" Title

Robbie Eagle beat Chris Candido (Jan. 10, Chilhowie, Va.)

The Hornet beat Robbie Eagle (Jan. 10, Chilhowie, Va.)

Bruiser Bedlam beat Mike Furnas via submission (Apr. 4—completed the championship run)

Mike Furnas beat Killer Kyle (Mar. 7, Dungannon, Va.)

Kendo the Samurai (Tim Horner) beat Chris Hamrick (May 2, Harriman, Tenn.)

Tracy Smothers beat Kendo the Samurai (June 3, Loudon, Tenn.—completed the championship run)
Chris Candido beat Scott Studd (July 5, Warrensville, N.C.)
Lance Storm beat Chris Candido (Aug. 8, Saltville, Tenn.)
Boo Bradley beat Storm (Sept. 5, Cumberland, Ky.)
Scott Studd beat Boo Bradley (Oct. 3, Burlington, N.C.)
Bryant Anderson beat Scott Studd via submission (Oct. 3, Burlington, N.C.—completed the championship run)
Brian Lee beat The Nightmare (Ted Allen) (Nov. 4, Oakwood, Va.)

SMW Tag Team Titles

The Rock & Roll Express beat The Heavenly Bodies (Feb. 18, Port Huron, Mich.—On Midwest Territorial Wrestling card)
The Heavenly Bodies beat Rock & Roll (Feb. 19, Taylor, Mich., MTW card)
The Rock & Roll Express beat The Bodies in a loser leaves town match (Apr. 1, Pikeville, Ky.)
Chris Candido & Brian Lee beat Rock & Roll (Apr. 23, Johnson City, Tenn.)
The Rock & Roll Express defeated Candido & Lee in a hair match (Aug. 5, Knoxville, Tenn., "Night of the Legends")
Chris Candido & Brian Lee beat Rock & Roll (Aug. 6, Johnson City, Tenn., "Fire on the Mountain")
The Rock & Roll Express beat Candido & Lee (Aug. 8, Saltville, Tenn.)
The Gangstas (New Jack & Sheik Muatapha) are awarded the tag team titles "via legal action from the courts" stemming over a restarting of a match in Knoxville days earlier. The Gangstas had defeated Rock & Roll before the match was restarted (Oct. 8, TV angle)

EXTREME CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING

Eastern Championship Wrestling Heavyweight Title

Shane Douglas pinned champion Terry Funk in an eight-man tag match (Mar. 26, Philadelphia, Pa., special rules match)
Title "eliminated" after tournament to crown ECW World Heavyweight Champion (Aug. 27)

ECW World Heavyweight Title

Shane Douglas defeated Too Cold Scorpio in tournament final (Aug. 27, Philadelphia, Pa.—ECW Hvt. title upgraded to ECW World Title after Douglas won tournament for the NWA World Heavyweight Title, but rejected that organization's title)

ECW Television Title

Tazmaniac pinned Sabu (Mar. 6, Philadelphia, Pa.)
J.T. Smith beat Tazmaniac (Mar. 6, Philadelphia)
The Pitbull beat Smith via decision (Apr. 16, Philadelphia)
Mikey Whipwreck pinned Pitbull (May 13, Philadelphia)
Jason pinned Whipwreck (Aug. 13, Philadelphia)
Too Cold Scorpio beat Jason (Nov. 4, Hamburg, Pa.)
Dean Malenko beat Scorpio (Nov. 4, Hamburg, Pa.)

ECW Tag Team Titles

The Public Enemy beat Kevin Sullivan & Tazmaniac (Mar. 6, Philadelphia)
Cactus Jack & Mikey Whipwreck beat TPE (Aug. 27, Philadelphia)
The Public Enemy beat Jack & Whipwreck (Aug. 27, Philadelphia)

Roster and Real Names

(Rosters are current as of approx. February 1995)

WWF

Bob Backlund
Paul Bearer
Adam Bomb
Bam Bam Bigelow
Black Smith
Alundra Blaze
King Kong Bundy
Brooklyn Brawler
Bushwacker Butch
Bushwacker Luke

Crush

Jimmy Del Rey
Ted DiBiase
Diesel
Dink
Doink
Duke Droese
Steven Dunn

Mr. Fuji

Henry Godwinn
Bart Gunn
Billy Gunn

Hagushi
Bret Hart
Owen Hart
Head Shrinker Fatu
Head Shrinker Seone
Bob Holly

Jeff Jarrett
Jeff Jarrett's Roaide
1-2-3 Kid

Kwang

Jean Paul Levesque
Lex Luger

Mo
Mabel
Shawn Michaels
Minotaur
Mo
Aldo Montoya

Jim Neidhart

Quebecer Pierre
Johnny Polo
Tom Prichard

Razor Ramon
Man Mountain Rock

Irwin R. Schyster
Davey Boy Smith

Robert Backlund
William Moody
Brian Clark
Scott Bigelow
Daryll Peterson
Debra Miceli
Chris Pallies
Steve Lombardi
Robert Miller
Brian Wickens

Brian Adams

Jimmy Richland
Ted DiBiase
Kevin Nash
(a/k/a Tiger Jackson)
Ray Apollo
Droese
Steve Doll

Harry Fujiwara

Mark Centerberry
Mike Plotcheck
Monty Sopt

Kensuke Shinzaki
Bret Hart
Owen Hart
Solofa Fatu
Sionne Vailahi
William Robert Howard

Jeff Jarrett
Brian Armstrong
Sean Waltman

Juan Rivera

Paul Michael Levesque
Larry Pfohl

Bobby Horne
Nelson Frasier
Michael Hickenbottom
Mike Hallick
Nelson Frasier
P.J. Walker

James Henry Neidhart

Carl Joseph Yvon Ouellet
Scott Levy
Tom Prichard

Scott Hall
Daryll Peterson

Lawrence Rotunda
David Smith

Tatanka
Undertaker

Timothy Well
Harvey Wippleman

WCW

Arn Anderson
Steve Austin
Brad Armstrong
Avalanche

Johnny B. Badd
Marcus Bagwell
Bunkhouse Buck
Blacktop Bully

Hacksaw Duggan

Bobby Eaton
Butcher

Ric Flair

Harlem Heat Booker T
Harlem Heat Steveie Ray
Bobby Heenan
Hulk Hogan
Tim Horner

Meng

Nasty Boy Nobbs
Nasty Boy Sags

Paul Orndorff

Buddy Lee Parker
Col. Robert Parker
The Patriot
Brian Pillman

Harley Race
Lord Steven Regal
Dustin Rhodes
Big Bubba Rogers
Paul Roma

Randy Savage
Sister Sherri
Dick Slater
Dave Sullivan
Kevin Sullivan
Mark Starr
Sting

Terry Taylor
Thunder

Vader
Van Hammer

Erik Watts
Alex Wright
James Earl

Larry Zbyszko

Chris Chavis
Mark Calloway

Mark Smith
David Lauer

Marty Lunde
Steve Williams
Robert James Jr.
John Tenta

Marc Mero
Marcus Bagwell
James Golden
Barry Darsow

Jim Duggan

Bobby Eaton
Ed Leslie

Richard Fliehr

n/a
n/a
Raymond Heenan
Terry Bollea
Tim Horner

Uliuli Fifita

Brian Yandrisovitz
Jerry Seganowich

Paul Orndorff

Dwayne Bruce
Robert Welch
Del Wilkes
Brian Pillman

Harley Race
Darren Mathews
Dustin Runnels
Ray Traylor
Paul Centopani

Randy Poffo
Sherri Martel
Van Slater
Bill Dannenhauser
Kevin Francis Sullivan
Mark Ashford-Smith
Steve Borden

Paul Taylor
Clark Haines

Leon White
Mark Hildreth

Eric Watts
Alex Wright
Dale Veazy

Larry Whistler

1994 TORCH YEARBOOK APPENDIX

SMW

Bryant Anderson
Bob Armstrong

Boo Bradley
D. Lo Brown

Chris Candido
Jim Cornette

Dirty White Boy

Tammy Fytch

Gangsta Mustafa
Gangsta New Jack
Robert Gibson

Buddy Landel
Brian Lee
Brian Logan

Anthony Michaels
Ricky Morton

Steve Skyfire
Tracy Smothers
Lance Storm
Ron Wright

USWA

Crusher Bones
Doug Basham
Scott Bowden
Big Business Brown

Brian Christopher
King Cobra
Big Daddy Cyrus

Wolfie D
Bill Dundee

Fantasia
Reggie B. Fine

Jeff Gaylord
Gorgeous George III
Doug Gilbert

Ron Harris
James Harris
Ederick Hines

J.C. Ice
Austin Idol (part time)

Jerry Lawler

Moondog Spot
Moondog Rex
Todd Morton

Ken Raper
Tommy Rich

Spellbinder
Scott Studd

Bryant Anderson
Robert James Sr.

A.C. Connor

Chris Candido
James Cornette

Tony Anthony

Tamara Sytch

Jamal Mustafa
Jerome Young
Ruben Kane

William Landel
Brian Harris
Brian Logan

Anthony Michaels
Rick Morton

Tracy Smothers
Lance Evers
Ron Wright

Doug Basham
Scott Bowden
Chris Brown

Brian Lawler

Kelly Wolfe
William Crookshanks

Jeff Gaylord
Doug Gilbert

Ron Harris

James Crookshanks
Dennis McCord

Jerry Lawler

Larry Booker
Nathan ???

Ken Raper
Thomas Richardson

Del Rios

Miss Texas

Jimmy Valiant (part time) James Valen
Sid Vicious Sid Eudy
Sgt. Victor
Skull Von Crush Vito Logrosso

Koko B. Ware James Ware
Tony Williams Anthony Williams

ECW

Chad Austin

Chris Benoit Chris Benoit
Tully Blanchard Tully Blanchard

Tommy Cairo Tommy Cairo

Paul E. Dangerously Paul Heyman
Shane Douglas Troy Martin
Tommy Dreamer Tom Laughlin

Johnny Crunge Mike Durham

Cactus Jack Michael Foley
Jason Ronald Jason Knight

Paul Lauria Paul Lauria

Dean Malenko Dean Simon

Hack Myers

911 Al Poling

Pitbull #1 Gary Smith
Pitbull #2 Anthony Durante

Steve Richards Steve Richards
Flyboy Rocco Rock Ted Petty
Axl Rotten Brian Knighton
Ian Rotten John Williams

Sabu Terry Brunk
Sandman Jim Fullington
Too Cold Scorpio Charlie Skaggs
Ron Simmons Ron Simmons
J.T. Smith John T. Smith
Al Snow Al Snow
Joey Styles Joe Bonsignore

Tazmaniac Pete Senerchia

Mikey Whipwreck John Watson
Woman Nancy Daus Sullivan

AAA

(Select Top Names)

Perro Aguayo Pedro Aguayo
Cien Caras Carmelo Reyes
Espectrito Mario Jiminez
Konnan El Barbaro Carlos Espada
Lizmark Juan Banos
Latin Lover Victor Resendez
Mascara Ano 2000 Jesus Reyes
Rey Misterio Jr. Oscar Gonzales
Rey Misterio Miguel Lopez
El Hijo del Santo Jorge Guzman
Volador Remo Banda

Past Secondary Award Winners

15. Best Workate ("Outstanding Wrestler" pre-1992)

1993: Bret Hart, Shawn Michaels, Vader
1992: Ric Flair, Bret Hart, Shawn Michaels
1991: Ric Flair, Cactus Jack, Arn Anderson
1990: Ric Flair, Curt Hennig, Bobby Eaton
1989: Ric Flair, Terry Funk, Rick Steamboat

16. Independent MVP

1993: Sabu, Terry Funk, Jerry Lawler
1992: Lightning Kid, Eddie Gilbert, Terry Funk
1991: Lightning Kid, Cactus Jack, Eddie Gilbert
1990: Ricky Rice, Terry Funk, Cactus Jack
1989: Ricky Rice, Jerry Lawler, Scotty the Body (Levy)

17. Rookie of the Year

1993: Sabu, Chris Candido, Smoking Gunns
1992: Brian Christopher, Too Cold Scorpio, Dallas Page
1991: Lightning (1-2-3) Kid, Johnny B. Badd, Jerry Lynn
1990: Steve Austin, El Gigante, J.W. Storm
1989: Wayne Bloom, Dustin Rhodes, Larry Cameron
1988: Scott Steiner, Ricky Rice, Derrick Dukes

18. Promotion of the Year

1993: SMW, WWF, WCW
1992: SMW, WWF, USWA
1991: WCW, WWF, TWA (Philadelphia)
1990: WCW, USWA, WWF
1989: NWA, WWF, Portland
1988: WWF, NWA, CWA (now USWA)

19. Non-TV Promotion of the Year

1993: NWA World Wrestling Alliance (NJ), CWA (Ind.), Big D Pro (Dallas)
1992: WWA (NJ), ECW (Phila.), PWA (Minn.)

20. Promoter of the Year

1993: Jim Cornette, Vince McMahon, Paul E. Dangerously
1992: Jim Cornette, Vince McMahon, Kip Frey

21. Angle of the Year

1993: Lawler-Hart at Summerslam, Kid upsets Ramon on Raw, Flair retires if loses at Starrcade
1992: Hennig's Prime Time turn; Savage-Flair-Elizabeth; Michaels-Janetty break-up
1991: Undertaker locks Ultimate Warrior in a casket; Flair's entrance into WWF; Savage bitten by Roberts's cobra
1990: Gilbert hits Lawler with speeding car; Windham doubles as Sting and gets pinned; Sting thrown out as member of Four Horsemen

22. Rising Star ("Most Improved" pre-1992)

1993: Too Cold Scorpio, Sabu, 1-2-3 Kid
1992: Shawn Michaels, Brian Christopher, Too Cold Scorpio.
1991: Dustin Rhodes, Steve Austin, Cactus Jack
1990: Ron Simmons, Scott Steiner, Butch Reed
1989: Lex Luger, Scott Steiner, Rick Rude
1988: Sting, Rick Steiner, Lex Luger

23. Tailspin of the Year ("Most Deproved" pre-1992)

1993: Rick Rude, Mr. Perfect, Sid Vicious
1992: Owen Hart, Ron Simmons, Hulk Hogan
1991: Hulk Hogan, Lex Luger, Roddy Piper
1990: Sting, Dusty Rhodes, Kerry Von Erich
1989: Terry Taylor, Dino Bravo, Hacksaw Duggan
1988: Dusty Rhodes, Greg Valentine, Ken Patera

24. Best Weekly TV Show

1993: WWF Raw, SMW, ECW
1992: SMW, WWF Superstars, WWF Prime Time
1991: WCW Sat. Nite, WWF Superstars, WWF Prime
1990: WCW Sat., WWF Superstars, USWA Challenge (Dallas)
1989: NWA World Championship (Sat.), NWA Power Hour, WWF Superstars
1988: WWF Superstars, NWA World Championship (Sat.), WWF Saturday Night's Main Event (not weekly).

25. Most Embarrassing Wrestler

1993: Shockmaster, Bastion Booger, Doink
1992: Papa Shango, Erik Watts, Van Hammer
1991: Van Hammer, P.N. News, Oz (Kevin Nash)

26. Worst Wrestler (with a semblance of a push)

1993: Equalizer, Shockmaster, Giant Gonzales
1992: Erik Watts, Nailz, Van Hammer
1991: Van Hammer, Bill Kazmaier, Oz
1990: Junkyard Dog, Ultimate Warrior, Night Stalker (a/k/a Adam Bomb)
1989: Andre the Giant, Ultimate Warrior, Zeus
1988: Andre the Giant, Ultimate Warrior, Junkyard Dog

27. Best Announcing Team

1993: McMahon & Heenan, Schiavone & Ventura, Caudle & Mantel
1992: Bobby Heenan & Gorilla Monsoon, Bob Caudle & Dutch Mantel, Vince McMahon & Mr. Perfect
1991: Jim Ross & Paul E. Dangerously, Monsoon & Heenan, McMahon & Roddy Piper & Randy Savage
1990: Ross & Dangerously, McMahon & Jesse Ventura, Monsoon & Heenan
1989: McMahon & Ventura, Ross & Jim Cornette, Ross & Caudle.

28. Best on Interviews

1993: Ric Flair, Jim Cornette, Jerry Lawler
1992: Ric Flair, Jim Cornette, Cactus Jack

29. Most Underutilized

1993: Chris Benoit, Terry Taylor, Bobby Eaton
1992: Terry Taylor, Arn Anderson, Scotty Flamingo (Levy)

30. Most Overpushed

1993: Sid Vicious, Lex Luger, Dustin Rhodes
1992: Erik Watts, Van Hammer, Tatanka

31. Most Insulting Stereotype

1993: Yokozuna, Missy Hyatt, Harlem Heat
1992: Razor Ramon, Missy Hyatt, Papa Shango

32. Best Wrestling Maneuver

1993: Vader's moonsault, Scorpio's 450 degree splash, Scott Steiner's Frankenstein
1992: Scorpio's 450 degree splash, Frankenstein, Liger Shooting Star Press

33. Worst Wrestling Maneuver

1993: Shockmaster's bearhug, Crush's headvice, Lex Luger's loaded forearm
1992: Erik Watts STF, Crush's head vice, Shango's voodoo

34. Worst Match

1993: Doinks vs. Bigelow et al (No. 24), Shockmaster vs. Kong (Dec. 27), War Games (Sept. 19)
1992: Rick Rude vs. Masa Chono (Oct. 25), Hogan vs. Sid Justice (Apr. 5), Todd Champion vs. Super Invader (May 17)

35. Worst Personality

1993: Sid Vicious, Lex Luger, Lord Steven Regal
1992: Erik Watts, Van Hammer, Papa Shango

36. Worst Interviews

1993: Scott Steiner, Ice Train, Crush
1992: Erik Watts, Tony Atlas, Van Hammer

37. Readers' Personal Favorite Wrestler

1993: Ric Flair, Shawn Michaels, Vader
1992: Ric Flair, Bret Hart, Ron Simmons

38. Readers' Least Favorite Wrestler

1993: Sid Vicious, Dusty Rhodes, Equalizer
1992: Erik Watts, Ultimate Warrior, Nailz

39. Japan Tag Team of the Year

1993: Toyota & Yamada, Hell Raisers, Misawa & Kobashi
1992: Manami Toyota & Toshiyo Yamada, Mitsuahara Misawa & Toshiaki Kawada, Terry Gordy & Steve Williams
1991: Hiroshi Hase & Kensuke Sasaki, Misawa & Kawada, Gordy & Williams.
1990: Williams & Gordy, Chono & Muto, Misawa & Kawada

40. Japan Feud of the Year

1993: Misawa et al vs. Kobashi et al, WAR vs. Skinheads, Hansen vs. Kobashi
1992: Liger vs. Samurai, Misawa & Co. vs. Tsuruta & Co, Chono vs. Muto
1991: Misawa vs. Tsuruta, Gordy & Williams vs. Misawa & Kawada, Vader vs. Tatsumi Fujinami
1990: Misawa vs. Tsuruta, Liger vs. Naoki Sano, Luger vs. Pegasus Kid (Chris Benoit)

41. Japan Match of the Year

1993: Kansai & Ozaki vs. Toyota & Yamada (Apr. 11), Kobashi vs. Williams (Aug. 31), Hansen vs. Kobashi (July 29)
1992: Toyota vs. Yamada (8/15), Chono vs. Muta (NWA tourn.), Toyota vs. Inoue (5/92)
1991: Hase & Sasaki vs. Steiners (3/9), Misawa & Kawada & Kobashi vs. Tsuruta & Akira Taue & Masa Fuchi (4/20), Liger vs. Owen Hart (4/28)

42. Japan Promotion of the Year

1993: All Japan Women, All Japan (Men), New Japan
1992: New Japan, All Japan, All Japan Women
1991: All Japan, New Japan, AJW
1990: All Japan, New Japan, UWF (now defunct)

43. Mexican Feud of the Year

New Category

Glossary of Insider Wrestling Terms

The following is a list of 116 wrestling terms, many of which are insider terms (i.e. "jargon") or are mainstream terms with their insider definition, which generally have been exclusive to the behind-the-scenes aspects of the wrestling business for most of this century, although in recent years as the inner-workings of the wrestling industry have become more open, many terms have been adopted by staunch fans and journalists who cover professional wrestling. Many of the terms date back to pro wrestling's carnival days in the early-1900s. Basic wrestling terms such as bodyslam and turnbuckle are not defined. (A term which is defined elsewhere, but used within a definition is denoted with "[dfn]" in case cross-reference is desired.)

A-Show (n) A wrestling event featuring the biggest name stars on a given night when another card is being run that same night by the same promotion in another town with lesser perceived wrestlers. **B-Team [dfn.]** and **C-Team** are how lesser shows are referred to.

A-Team (n) A group of wrestlers who are currently participating on A-shows [dfn.].

Abortion (n) A failed angle [dfn], match, or feud [dfn]; a flop. (Term being phased out in some circles due to emotions associated with that word; considered in some circles a tasteless term.)

Angle (n) An event or series of events, usually a confrontation of some kind among wrestlers and managers, that begins or intensifies a feud.

Apter Mags (n) 1. Used to describe family of magazines of which Bill Apter is part of the staff. The magazine group, most prominent of which is *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*, came to be identified with editor Apter in the '70s. 2. Sometimes used to describe all magazines that contain fictional articles rather than straight journalism.

Around the Horn (n) The road trip to each town or a series of towns in which a promotion runs events.

B-Show (n) A wrestling event featuring the secondary team of lesser name-value wrestlers when on the same night in another town a group of bigger name wrestlers are putting on an event. The other show is the A-show [dfn.].

B-Team (n) A group of wrestlers who are currently participating on B-shows [dfn.].

Baby (n) Short for "babyface" [dfn.], although "Face" [dfn.] is more commonly used as short for "babyface."

Babyface (n) The "good guy" or "hero." The performer whom the promoter books [dfn] in the position of being cheered.

Blade (v) To cut one's self, usually with a small portion of a razor blade with tape wrapped around all but a fraction of a millimeter of the cutting edge. The exposed portion is then run across the skin to cause a

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clean, shallow slice in the skin which bleeds.

Blow Off (v) To end a feud [dfn.] or marriage [dfn.] at a wrestling card, usually a pay-per-view, with a decisive finish to a match between two feuding wrestlers; each wrestler usually moves on to feud with someone else although at times it is one or both wrestlers' final match for the given promotion.

Blow Up (v) To become cardiovascularly exhausted during a match.

Book 1. (v) To schedule a wrestler for a card. 2. (n) Slang for booking position.

Booked (n) Past tense of book [dfn], to be scheduled for a card.

Booker (n) One who books [dfn] and hires wrestlers, decides who wins and loses matches and in what manner those finishes occur, plans the long-term direction of the company, and organizes and plots television programs.

Bootleg (adj.) Describing an item that is illegally duplicated and sold or traded, usually copyrighted tapes, either wrestling broadcasts or commercial tapes, traded among wrestling fans around the country. Also describes someone who deals in bootlegged material. (There is also public domain selling and trading that takes place which is legal and not considered "bootleg" dealing.)

Bounce (n) Old, rarely used term for the move that leads to the pinfall.

Boys (n) Wrestlers.

Bozark (n) A female wrestler; a rarely used old carney [dfn.] term.

Brass (n) Management.

Bull (n) Old, rarely used term for the promoter.

Bump (n, v) To fall to the mat after being on the receiving end of a wrestling maneuver or blow to the body.

Bury (v) 1. To criticize or attempt to defame someone. 2. To lower someone in the eyes of the fans or their peers.

Broadway (n) A draw, called that because years ago it was considered a positive by both wrestlers.

Business, The (n) The wrestling industry.

Call a Match (v) Inform opponent throughout match of upcoming moves or spots [dfn]; i.e. to "lead the dance."

Canned Heat (n) When crowd cheering and booing is added to a wrestling TV show in post-production.

Card (n) A line-up of matches.

Carney (n.) Short for "carnival terminology," the root of many insider wrestling terms where professional wrestling has roots in the early-1900s.

Carry (v) 1. To "call a match" [dfn]. 2. To make a lesser opponent look skillful in the eyes of the fans.

Chairshot (v) The act of hitting someone with a chair during the course of a wrestling match or brawl.

Cheap Heat (n) Usually referring to heel [dfn] fan heat [dfn], although can refer to any form of fan heat, means to achieve heat through means that do not take polished and respected skill, such as swearing at fans, using racial epithets, making lewd hand gestures, or exploiting a political situation (i.e. a hostage crisis, war, or natural disaster).

Color (n) Blood.

Cut a Promo (v) 1. To be interviewed or give promotional speech on upcoming match in order to arouse fan interest in match. 2. (slang) To brow-beat or demean someone skilfully.

Dagger (n) A prepared blade with more of the razor exposed than necessary.

Dark Match (n) A match that is not taped for television at a television taping or live broadcast.

Double Juice (adj.) Means two wrestlers bladed [dfn.] during a given match. Can be expanded to "triple juice," etc.

Draw (n) 1. A time-limit match with no winner. 2. Insider term for cash payment night of show as an advance on the earned paycheck to be issued later; a per diem.

Dusty finish (n) To have an apparent pinfall in a match, usually counted by a second referee, only to have it overruled by the original referee, who usually was temporarily knocked out while the second referee counted a pinfall. (Although not a finish invented by Dusty Rhodes, it was used so often by Rhodes during his booking reigns that the finish [dfn] has taken on his name.)

Face (n) Short for babyface [dfn.].

False Comeback (n) The point in a match where the babyface [dfn] begins to regain offense only to quickly be stopped by heel; done to arouse heat [dfn].

Feud (n) A feigned battle, usually a series of matches, between two or more wrestlers or teams meant to draw fans to an arena.

Finish (n) The ending to a match; can include a series of stock events that lead up to the pinfall, submission, disqualification, countout, or draw.

Finisher (n) Move that leads to end of match.

Foreign Object (n) An object foreign to a match; a weapon to be used to injure an opponent. (Sometimes jokingly called an "international object" stemming from Ted Turner's policy in the late-'80s of never referring to anything as "foreign," but rather to use the word "international," on television stations he owned; although primarily aimed at CNN, it was picked up by TBS wrestling announcers.)

Gas (n) Steroids.

Gate (n) Amount of money generated from ticket sales.

Geek (v) Cut one's self.

Gig Mark (n) A scar from blading.

Gimmick. (n) 1. The persona, usually artificially created, one has in order to draw fan interest. 2. Slang for a foreign object [dfn].

Gimmicked (v) Slang for hitting someone with a foreign object [dfn].(adj.) Indicates object has been altered, i.e. "gimmicked chair" would indicate it was altered to break easily when used as a weapon.

Gizzmo (n) Old term for gimmick [dfn.]

Glob (v) To stiff [dfn.] someone.

Go Home (v) Said by one wrestler to another, meaning to go to the finish of a match.

Go Over (v) To beat someone. (also, "put over")

Going Bush (v) Moving from major league, full-time promotion to a regional or independent, i.e. "bush league"; an older term not used much today.

Green Boy (n) Inexperienced wrestler.

Gusher (n) A deep, heavily bleeding cut, usually as a result of blading [dfn.]; severity of cut can be intended or unintended.

Handles (n) Names wrestlers use among themselves, sometime real names, usually not their ring name; an older term not often used today.

Hardway (adv.) A type of cut incurred without a razor blade, usually unintentionally.

Heat 1. (n) Crowd noise, usually means boos and jeers, although also refers to general crowd noise, including cheers and clapping. 2. (slang) To "have heat" is to be in poor standing with someone.

Heel (n) The "bad guy" or "villain." The performer whom the promoter books [dfn] in the position of being booed.

Highspot (n) A move, usually aerial, that includes fast motion among two or more wrestler; often risk is involved or at least perceived.

Hold Up (v) When a wrestler refuses to wrestle until he gets a payday bigger than originally agreed upon with the promoter.

Hood (n) Masked wrestler.

Hot Move (n) A highspot (dfn.); a maneuver by a wrestler that is exciting.

Hot Tag (n) When a battered babyface finally tags fresh partner.

House (n) Number of fans in building, can include

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non-paying fans.

House Show (n) 1. A card not taped for television. 2. An event in a town visited consistently by the given promotion.

Job (n) A planned, voluntary loss.

Jobber (n) Wrestler who loses, usually on television, to help image of pushed [dfn.] wrestler; preliminary wrestler; one who does jobs [dfn.]

Jobroni (n, slang) 1. Slang for jobber [dfn.] 2. Used to refer to wrestler with a push [dfn.] who has done several jobs [dfn.] lately.

Juice (v) To cut oneself in order to draw blood, usually from the forehead. (n) 1. Blood. 2. Slang for steroids or other muscle-enhancing drugs.

Kay Fabian (n) Slang term for a mark [dfn.] (See also, Kayfabe).

Kayfabe, Ka-Fabe (n, v, adj.) Dating back to carnival days, this word is used in many contexts, generally referring to the protecting of industry "secrets." (The word is often said by one in the business to indicate everyone around him should stop talking openly because someone not privy to the inner-workings of the business just entered a room. To "kayfabe someone" is to withhold information from them.)

Loose (adj.) To work loose is to be a wrestler who applies holds and moves with less force than average; considered a positive in most situations. Opposite of tight [dfn.]

Mark. (n) A person who believes wrestling matches to be real. (n, slang) A person who believes they are an expert on the wrestling business based on limited knowledge of the inner-workings of the sport; derogatory.

Mark Out. (v, slang) To enthusiastically be into an angle [dfn] or match as if you were "a mark"; to suspend one's disbelief for the sake of enjoying to a greater extent a match or an angle [dfn].

Marriage (n) 1. A feud [dfn] between two wrestlers or teams. 2. A series of matches that goes to each town in which a promotion runs live events, sometimes more than once in each town, until the feud is finished.

Marshmallow (n) A fat wrestler; old, rarely used term.

Mouthpiece (n) An on-camera manager.

No-show (v) To not show up for a scheduled appearance, can refer either to a promoter falsely booking a wrestler or a wrestler missing a scheduled appearance.

Office (n) 1. The headquarters of a wrestling promotion. 2. Slang for the promoter and office workers, source of decisions that affect wrestlers on the road.

Over (adj.) Popular with intended audience.

Paper (v) To give away tickets to an event, often done to fill seats for television tapings.

Paying Dues (v) General term for gaining experience and showing respect toward veterans; includes in-ring experience, long drives, hard work for low pay.

Pencil (n) A booker [dfn] or promoter.

Plant (n) A person—sometimes a wrestler, office employee, or friend or relative of employee—in audience who feigns being a fan and participates in angle [dfn].

Policeman (n) A wrestler skillful or strong enough to enforce a promoter's wishes; able and willing to shoot [dfn.] to make a point with unruly opponent; somewhat outdated today.

Pop. (v) A rise, usually cheering or booing, out of the crowd.

Post (v) To ram opponent's head into the steel ring post or similar object.

Potato (v) To legitimately, either accidentally or on purpose, hit or execute a move with force on opponent.

Program (n) Same as feud [dfn] or marriage [dfn], including matches, interviews, and angles [dfn].

Promoter (n.) Usually refers to the head of a wrestling company, although can refer to regional promoters who help the head of a company promote events.

Promotion 1. (n) A wrestling company. 2. (v) Hype for an event.

Pullapart Brawl (n) A brawl involving an original batch of combatants and several more wrestlers from the locker room who intended to either take sides or break up the original brawl.

Push (v) The act of beneficially promoting a wrestler on television and through other means in order to gain popularity or recognition, usually through victories, interviews, and features.

Put Over (v) 1. To be "put over" is to get the pinfall victory. To "put someone over" is to get pinned. 2. To compliment someone.

Red. (n) Blood.

Rest Hold (n) A hold that takes place during a match that gives wrestlers time to breath between highspots, applied lightly, without pressure.

Road Agent (n) Employee who travels with wrestlers and oversees execution of house shows.

Screwjob (adj.) A finish with controversial ending, usually upsetting fans, often inconclusive or unsatisfying; often a reversal against the babyface (derogatory).

Sell (v) To act as if you have been on the receiving end

of a legitimate wrestling or fighting maneuver, both in motion and in facial expression.

Sheets (n) Slang for industry trade journals, fan newsletters, results bulletins, fanzines, and fan club bulletins; often used in a derogatory tone. (Of those publications, those which contain "insider" information are also referred to as "kayfabe sheets." Derogatory terms include "dirt sheets" and "scandal sheets.")

Shoot (n, adj.) 1. A work [dfn] that becomes a legitimate wrestling contest or fight. 2. (v, slang) To legitimately hit or hurt one's opponent on purpose. 3. (adj.) A comment with some truth behind it.

Shooter (n) One who shoots [dfn] using amateur wrestling skills.

Showing Light (v) Because of flawed execution, to unintentionally expose to fans that a maneuver did not connect, i.e. someone throwing a punch which the opponent sells [dfn] when the punch did not come close to hitting the opponent.

Smark (n) A relatively new slang term for a fan who believes he or she is "smart" [dfn] based on a certain amount of inside knowledge, but is perceived by someone else (usually someone within the industry) to be less informed than the fan himself or herself believes; combination of the words smart and mark [dfn].

Smart (n) A person who has knowledge of the inner-workings of the wrestling business.

Smoz (n) A crowd of wrestlers during a pullapart [dfn.]brawl.

Soft (adj.) See "loose."

Spot (n) A wrestling move or series of moves.

Spot Show (n) A wrestling event held in a town not visited on a consistent basis.

Squash 1. (n, adj.) A match, usually on television designed to put over [dfn.] a pushed [dfn.] wrestler who dominates offense and beats opponent, usually a jobber [dfn.]. 2. (v) To dominate offense and win a match.

Stiff 1. (adj.) To hit harder or execute holds and moves with more force than most; one who "works [dfn] tight." 2. (v) When a promoter doesn't pay a wrestler or when a wrestler takes an advance payment and doesn't show up at the card [dfn.]

Stocking (n) Old term for masked wrestler.

Stooge 1. (n) Anyone who informs promoter of something wrestlers would prefer to be kept secret, often another wrestler or referee. 2. (v) To tell on someone.

Strap (n) Championship belt.

Stretch (v) To use a legitimate and painful amateur wrestling hold.

Stretched (v) To be injured, sometimes intentionally by opponent; also refers to a worked [dfn.] injury.

Stretchered (v) To be carried out on stretcher while feigning an injury suffered during a match or an angle.

Strong Style Wrestling (n) A form of worked [dfn.] wrestling found in Japan that stresses realistic-looking action at the expense of highspots [dfn.]. Sometimes called "shooting," although that's rarely an accurate account of the matches it is referring to.

Submission Hold. (n) 1. A hold that fans believe can lead to the finish of a match via submission. 2. A hold that is meant to invoke high emotion due to being complicated and more devastating-looking than a common resthold.

Swerve (n) 1. A joke pulled by one wrestler on another. 2. A false report by a wrestler or promoter to another wrestler or promoter or a member of the press.

Switch the Heat (v) To pass blame.

Territory (n) 1. The area in which a given promotion runs wrestling matches and airs its television show. 2. Slang for actual territorial wrestling promotion.

Tight (adj) To work tight is to be a wrestler who applies holds and move with more force than average; realistic. Can be a negative or positive quality, depending on the style the opponent prefers. Opposite of loose [dfn.], soft [dfn.]

Tope (v) Flying move over top rope from inside the ring to floor (pronounced toe-pay).

Trust (n) An alliance among regional promotions.

Turn. (v) To change one's persona from heel [dfn] to babyface [dfn] or from babyface to heel.

Tweener. (n) One who is neither a babyface [dfn] nor a heel [dfn], or is in the process of turning [dfn] from one to another.

Work. (n) 1. A rationalized lie 2. Predetermined outcome. (v) To lie, deceive, or mislead someone. 3. (v) To skillfully wrestle.

Worker (n) Wrestler. Context is usually positive.

Workrate (n) The pace of a match and the skill level exhibited therein.

EDITOR'S NOTES

Please bring to my attention any errors you find in this yearbook. If you are a wrestler and your name was spelled incorrectly in the roster listings, please drop me a note or call with a correction. Any additions or addendums to the Glossary of Wrestling Terms is also welcome. I want to continue to expand the listing in future years to be as accurate and exhaustive as possible. In future editions of *Pro Wrestling Torch Weekly* we will list any corrections or additions on pg. 6 in "Editor's Notes." Suggestions for future award categories are also welcome. Send all comments and reviews of this yearbook to the *Torch* address.

Mail Order Listings

The following is an exhaustive alphabetical listing of all periodicals or books related to pro wrestling that have recently crossed my desk. The *Torch* assumes no responsibility for unfulfilled orders, faulty transactions, or poor products. Prices listed are for U.S. orders. Inquire for other rates...

Cauliflower Alley Club Newsletter

Editor: Art Abrams
5221 Sierra Villa Dr.
Los Angeles, CA 90041

Annual membership \$20... A non-profit organization dedicated to putting out a newsletter periodically and hosting wrestling conventions around the country with mainly retired wrestlers and boxers... A long-running organization... Write for more info...

Mat Marketplace

P.O. Box 2371
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

Single copy \$2.50... An international wrestling collectors' publication featuring extensive listings and reviews of wrestling merchandise including addresses for pen pals, Japan and Mexico video tape sources, wrestling training schools, newsletters, and classified ads for just about anything related to wrestling you can imagine... Usually features cover story of some kind... 12 pages...

On the Mat

Editor: Gary Langevin
124 Maple St.
Newport, VT 05855-1418

Monthly at \$2.00 per issue or \$20 for 12 issues... Features editorials, news summaries, and interviews... Put together in an informal style on a typewriter... 8 pages...

Also available from the same address is the *On the Mat Annual 1994* for \$10 featuring over 150 pages of reprints of NWA programs from the '70s and '80s, clippings, and first-run features on The Funk Brothers... A must buy for nostalgia buffs or longtime fans of the Funks...

Pro Wrestling Sushi

Editor: Jeff Mullins
P.O. Box 36189
San Jose, CA 95158

Reunion issue available for \$3... A strange mix of humor, commentary, and reader interplay. The year-end "reunion issue" featured its own wrestling poll including a category where readers sent in "the questions (some biting) they'd most like to ask Dave Meltzer or me." Among the 15 categories: "Who Gives a Rat's Ass" (wrestler or person you care least about), "Potato of the Year," "Ultimate Moment of the Year," etc... Well written and totally different... 30 pages...

Ring Around the Northwest

Editor: Mike Rodgers
2740 Lewellyn
Troutdale, OR 97060

\$1 per monthly issue... The last of a dying breed of regional fanzines... Coverage of the Pacific Northwest wrestling scene with results, news, and clippings... 6-8 pages...

Wrestling Observer Newsletter

Editor: Dave Meltzer
P.O. Box 1228
Campbell, CA 95009

Four weekly issues \$8 (\$15 for 8 issues)... The pioneer of truthful wrestling journalism... A worldwide industry source for statistics (including many used in this yearbook)... In-depth global coverage of the Japan and Mexico wrestling scenes in addition to U.S. news and commentary... 12 pages...

Wrestling Perspective

P.O. Box 351
Lyndon Center, VT 05850-0351

\$1.50 per monthly issue... The best of the current-day commentary oriented newsletters... Includes occasional interviews, also... Nearly 50 issues published thus far... 12 pages...

Wrestling Then & Now

Editor: Evan Ginzburg
P.O. Box 640471
Oakland Gardens Station
Flushing, NY 11364

Single copy \$1.25, monthly... Features literary magazine style essays looking back fondly on days gone by in wrestling with a nice mix of clippings in each issue... With over 60 issues published, one of the longer running monthlies... 10 pages...

Wrestling Title Histories, Third Edition

Gary Will
P.O. Box 40005
Waterloo, ONT N2J 4V1 Canada

\$40 per copy... An exhaustive listing of title changes from every corner of the United States and the world dating back to the 1800s through today... The only reference book of its type. A bit pricey, but for a title history buff, the ultimate source...

Wrestling Underground Yearbook 1994

Editor: Georgiann Makropulos
23-44 30th Drive
Astoria, NY 11102

\$12... Booklet includes sample copies of Chairshots, Mat Marketplace, Wrestling Chatterbox, Wrestling Reality, and Wrestling Then & Now...

PRO WRESTLING TORCH ANNUAL IV

There is only one previously published *Torch* book that is still available today, 1991's 90 page *Pro Wrestling Torch Annual IV*. To this day, it remains my personal favorite *Torch* book and has received the highest critical acclaim. It is available for \$10 from the *Torch* address (P.O. Box 201844, Minneapolis, MN 55420) and includes the following features...

- A nine page in-depth career interview with Jerry Lawler... The most controversial "Torch Talk" ever—with former WCW V.P. Bill Watts. It's the interview that influenced WCW officials to hire him and them turned out to be the interview that foreshadowed his firing... Plus interviews with legends Bruno Sammartino, Lou Thesz, and the late Roy Shires. A true education for any serious wrestling fan...

- Essays by readers on their "Most Memorable Moments" in wrestling and their "All-Time Favorite."

- Dozens of humorous "Top Ten Lists" and a wrestling comic strip by Bill Kunkel.

- A classic humor article by Mark Madden on Dusty Rhodes, Chris Zavisla's profile of Atsushi Onita, plus features by Bruce Mitchell, Eric Krol, and more.